

NILES

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

our • vision • forward



CITY OF NILES

Comprehensive Plan
March 2024



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the members of the community who were involved in this planning process including the steering committee, residents, and members of Council.

This plan is a reflection of their dedication to the future of Niles.

CITY OF NILES

Steve Mientkiewicz, Mayor

Bianca Rozenblad, Planner and Grants Coordinator

STEERING COMMITTEE

Steve Mientkiewicz, City of Niles Mayor

Katie Fallo, Citizen

Bianca Rozenblad, City of Niles Planner and Grants Coordinator

Ryan McNaughton, Citizen

Nancy Jane, Citizen

Giovanne Merlo, City of Niles Auditor

Shea McMillian, Youngstown Warren Regional Chamber

Robert Marino, Niles City Council President

Noah Young, High School Student

Linda Marchese, Niles City Council Member

Jason Altobelli, Niles CIC President

Anthony Cafaro Jr, Cafaro Co.

Belinda Weiss, McKinley Memorial

Carrie Kibby, McKinley Library

Matt Kresac, Cadence Care

Tony Ciminero, Ciminero's Banquet Center

Ann Marie Thigpen , Niles CSD

Jordan Taylor, Mahoning Valley Scrappers

Debbie Barber, Avenue and Main

Kevin Robertson, City of Niles

Jeff Crowley, City of Niles

PREPARED BY:

ms consultants inc

- » Kelley Britt, Project Management
- » Katie Phillips, Project Management
- » Alex Long, Urban Design and Planning
- » Zachary Shultz, Urban Design and Planning

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION 1

Plan Overview

Project Timeline

II. EXISTING CONDITIONS 4

Demographics

Housing

Economics

Transportation

Environmental

Parks & Recreation

III. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT 19

Overview

Survey Results

IV. LAND USE 27

Existing Land Use & Zoning

Recommended Future Land Use Districts

Priority Development Areas

V. IMPLEMENTATION 52

Downtown Revitalization

Parks & Recreation

Housing

Economic Development

Transportation

Land Use

VI. APPENDIX 82

Appendix A: Public Engagement Report

**Appendix B: Youngstown Air Force Base - Joint
Land Use Study**

**Appendix C: Niles Ordinance for Community
Reinvestment Area (2006)**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Niles Comprehensive Plan is a foundational document adopted by the city with the purpose of guiding future policies and decisions. The plan includes recommended strategies the city should consider implementing in order to fulfill its goals and vision for itself. Land use is an important component of the plan, which is used to guide future zoning decisions and changes. Public engagement played a key role in the plan's creation to help develop the community's goals and vision.

In the past, the City of Niles has updated previous comprehensive plans, making minor changes over time. This document is an entirely new Comprehensive Plan, and the process to create the plan was as important as the result.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The population in Niles is older and tends to earn lower incomes when compared to the rest of the state and county. Households in Niles have also become smaller with fewer children over the past decade. The city's housing stock is not suited for the future if these trends are to continue, as over two thirds of all housing units are single-family detached. This type of development generally leads to higher cost burdens and the use of a car, which can be unsafe for seniors and an additional cost burden for lower earners. A lack of starter homes is also barrier for young professionals and recent college graduates from choosing to live in Niles.

The plan recommends increasing housing diversity across the city, including new construction in Downtown Niles, which should prioritize mixed-use apartments over retail in order to create an appealing shopping district.

There are no Mahoning River access points in Niles for water recreation activities, which could be attractive to potential future residents.

45.4 Median Age in Niles in 2021

39.4 Median Age in OH in 2021

40.6 Median Age in Niles in 2010

24.1% Of the Niles Population is over the age of 65 years

52.4% Earn Under \$50k

49.7% in Trumbull Co
40.9% in Ohio

14.5% Earn Over \$100k

18.9% in Trumbull Co
28.0% in Ohio

\$45.6k Median Income
Niles

\$61.9k in Trumbull Co
\$50.3k in Ohio

Niles, OH
Trumbull Co

2.2 Average Household Size **2.3** in 2010

22.9% Households with Children **27.4%** in 2010

67.1%

Of All Housing Units in Niles are **Single-Family Detached**

Source: 2006-2010, 2017-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates

WHAT WE HEARD

The plan's public engagement process helped gather input to determine the strategies and land use recommendations of the plan. Engagement opportunities for the public included open houses and pop-up booths at community events in Niles. The project's steering committee, made up of community representatives and stakeholders, helped guide the planning process and ensure the final plan met the recommendations of the community. The Niles Comprehensive Plan Survey gathered 334 responses and collected information about the existing conditions in Niles and what priorities should be addressed by the plan.

Downtown revitalization and economic development, specifically the attraction of small businesses, were common goals heard through all forms of engagement. Participants wanted to see more things to do in downtown, including shops and restaurants, public green space, and events. Housing was another high priority item, with participants prioritizing more housing options in walkable neighborhoods with access to green space.

FUTURE LAND USE DISTRICTS

A major part of the comprehensive plan was the creation of future land use districts, which are used to guide future development decisions. Based on feedback from the community and the existing conditions analysis, the plan's future land use districts were created with the following goals in mind:

- » Encouraging mixed-use development in Downtown Niles
- » Increasing housing diversity city-wide
- » Allowing small businesses to be located along arterial corridors to increase the number of residents who can walk to shop
- » Increasing access to the Mahoning River

SURVEY RESULTS KEY TAKEAWAYS



What would make you visit Downtown more often?

84% of respondents selected **More Shops & Restaurants**

52% **More Community Events**

51% **Beautification Efforts**



Top 3 Development Priorities

85% of respondents selected **Attract/Support Small Businesses**

51% **Historic Preservation**

40% **Zoning & Development Guidelines**



Top 3 Housing Priorities

56% of respondents selected **More Sidewalks & Trails**

50% **Developing New Housing Options**

49% **Access to Parks & Open Space**

FUTURE LAND USE DISTRICTS

Downtown *Destination shopping & mixed-use district*

Commercial *Vehicular Oriented Retail/Restaurants*

Urban Edge *Walkable Mixed-Use Corridors*

Residential *Traditional, single-family housing*

Mixed Residential *Greater diversity in housing types*

Employment Center *Office Parks, Manufacturing, & Industrial*

Institutional *Civic, Educational, & Religious Facilities*

Parkland *Present & Potential Future Parks & Natural Areas*

Agriculture *Farmland*

RECOMMENDATION STRATEGIES

Feedback from residents, city officials, and the steering committee came together to help develop the plan's recommended strategies, which are divided into six topics, summarized in the paragraphs below.

Downtown Revitalization

Residents expressed a desire to see more things to do in downtown Niles. To accomplish this goal, strategies are aimed at incentivizing and encouraging mixed-use development and beautifying the downtown area to create attractive public space for visitors.

Parks and Recreation

Continuing the creation of a regional destination at Waddell Park was a high priority among residents and city officials. Increasing waterfront access was another high priority, and can be accomplished through the creation of a regional blue-way along Mosquito Creek and the construction of parks and trails along the Mahoning River.

Housing

Housing strategies are targeted towards increasing the city's housing diversity to fit the needs of the community and include addressing food insecurity.

Economic Development

Economic development strategies are aimed at attracting workers to Niles' industrial companies and growing commercial uses within the city.

Transportation

The plan's transportation strategies are aimed at enhancing alternative modes and increasing traffic safety, especially along the U.S. 422 corridor.

Land Use

The plan's future land use districts should be used to update the city's zoning map in order to achieve the desired development patterns.

TOPICS AND GOALS OF THE NILES COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

- » Reactivate Underutilized Storefronts
- » Incentivize Attractive Uses
- » Create Public Space Complementary to Retail



PARKS AND RECREATION

- » Create a Blue-Way Along Mosquito Creek
- » Upgrade existing park facilities
- » Utilize the Mahoning River as an Economic and Cultural Asset



HOUSING

- » Improve Housing Quality and Access for All
- » Promote Walkable, Mixed-Use Neighborhoods
- » Increase Resident Access to Healthy Foods



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- » Retain and Support Growth of Industrial Areas
- » Encourage Commercial Development Across the City



TRANSPORTATION

- » Achieve a Sustainable and Efficient Multi-Modal Transportation Network
- » Ensure the Safety of Non-Motorists Along U.S. 422



LAND USE

- » Codify Desired Future Development Patterns

I. INTRODUCTION

- » Plan Overview
- » About the Planning Process
- » Project Timeline

PLAN OVERVIEW

The City of Niles, Ohio is an attractive and unique community in the greater Youngstown region. It offers strong neighborhoods and parks to residents and affordable, family-oriented housing. Downtown Niles is located at the confluence of the Mahoning River and Mosquito Creek and has the potential to become a walkable, shopping destination. The City's main commercial corridor, U.S. 422, is an important regional thoroughfare, along which the Eastwood Mall resides.

In the past, the City of Niles has updated previous comprehensive plans, making minor changes over time. This document is an entirely new Comprehensive Plan, and the process to create the plan was as important as the result. The plan prepares the City for 21st century growth, with a fresh vision rooted in data and public input.

This chapter provides a summary of the planning process.

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is a foundational document adopted by the city for the purpose of guiding future policies and decisions. Public outreach is a critical component of a plan's creation, ensuring the final strategies and recommendations reflect the wants, needs, and future vision of the community. Land use is an important component of a comprehensive plan, which is used to guide future zoning decisions and changes.

The Niles Comprehensive Plan, rooted in community aspirations and implementable goals, provides an honest evaluation of present and future needs. The planning process brings together community members to establish goals related to:

- » Downtown Revitalization
- » Parks & Recreation
- » Economic Development
- » Housing
- » Transportation
- » Land Use



Figure 1.1 | City of Niles sign (Source: City of Niles)

HOW WILL THE PLAN BE USED?

Comprehensive plans are legally-adopted documents used to guide decision-making in a community. Local officials should consult the comprehensive plan when making determinations about policies, projects, and programs; particularly as it relates to zoning, land use, and development. The Plan provides a one-stop shop for understanding local conditions and demographics, as well as long-term, inclusive objectives.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The plan should be treated as a living document which is reviewed and updated on a regular basis so that it most accurately reflects the dynamic views, aspirations, and needs of the community.

Creating a successful plan requires a careful balance of art and science; as well as the proper resources to develop a grand vision into a reality.

Inputs

Multiple inputs are intentionally crafted into the production of a comprehensive plan. Extensive data on the local community is reviewed through the framework of regional trends and national best practices in planning and development. The local existing conditions are then informed by community-led visioning through ongoing and comprehensive public engagement.

Outcomes

The planning process provides extensive opportunities to consider and debate how the community would like to grow, adapt, and deliver its local brand of services and identity. These conversations culminate in the production of the plan document which includes a few key elements (Figure 1.2).



Figure 1.2 | The Planning Process

WHO IS INVOLVED?

Plan objectives and implementable action steps are derived through conversations involving:

- » Residents
- » Businesses
- » Neighborhood and civic groups
- » Visitors
- » Employees
- » Local officials

Steering Committee

A Steering Committee of community leaders guided the development of the Plan. Its members met with city officials and the consultant team five times throughout the 13-month long planning process. Meetings included discussions surrounding public engagement facilitation, land use recommendations, and implementation strategies.

Project Timeline

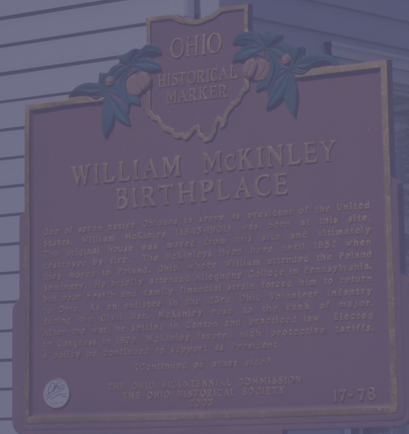
The plan took close to 18 months to create as shown in Figure 1.3.



Figure 1.3 | Niles Comprehensive Plan Timeline

II. EXISTING CONDITIONS

- » Demographics
- » Housing
- » Economics
- » Transportation
- » Environmental
- » Parks & Recreation



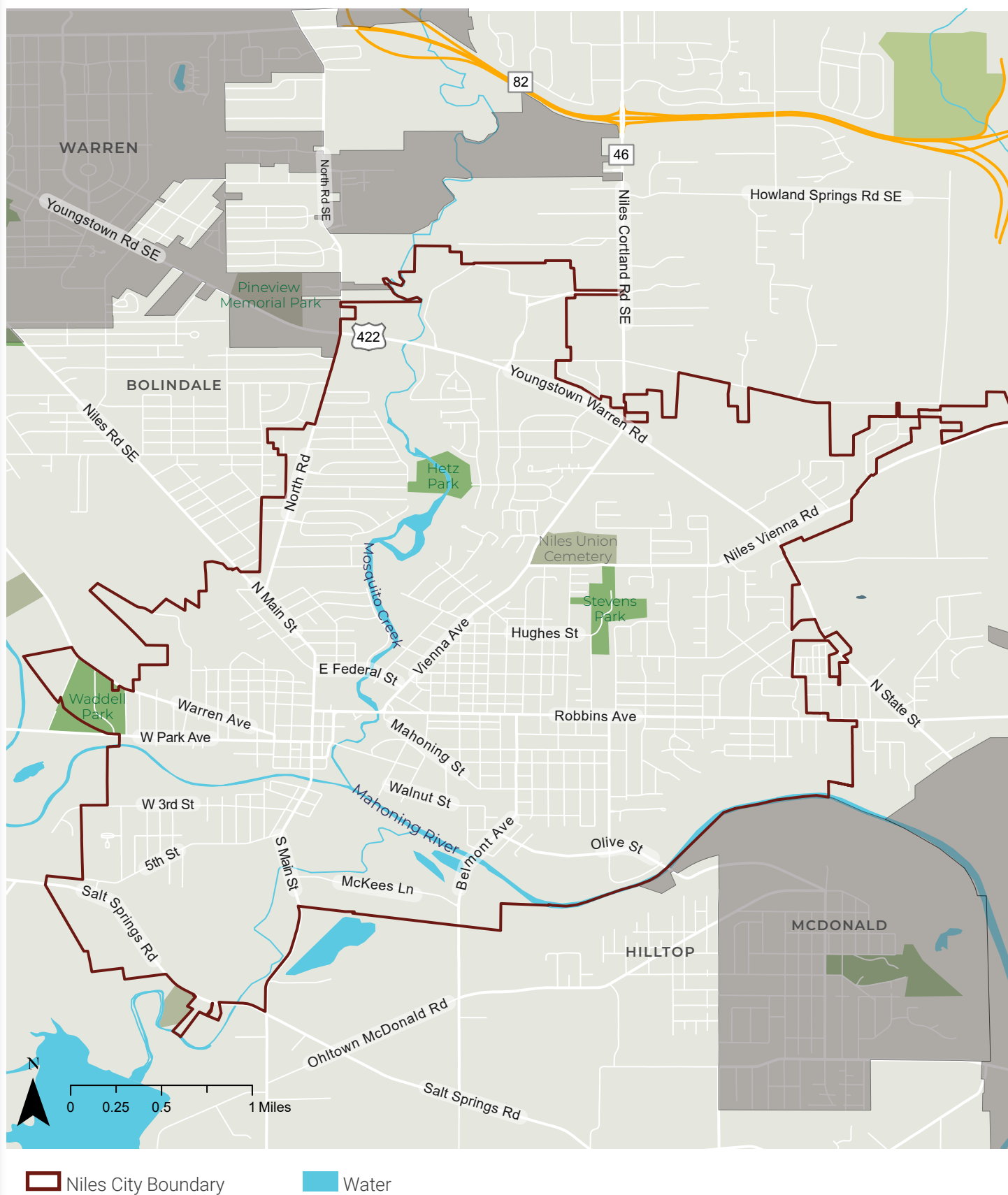


Figure 2.1 Niles City Boundary

DEMOGRAPHICS

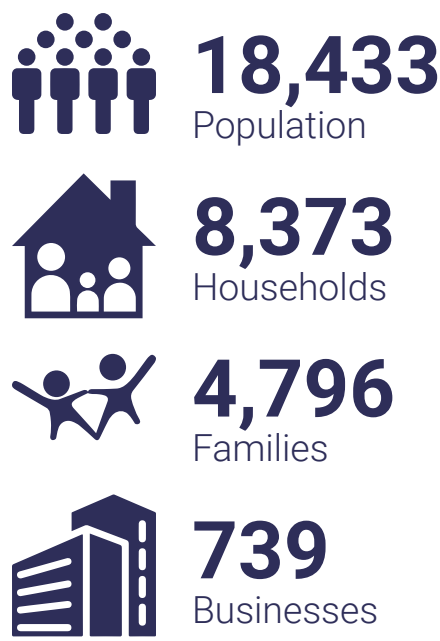
Niles is the 2nd largest City in Trumbull county, with just over 18,433 residents making up 8,373 households in 2020.

When paired with input from the plan’s public engagement, existing conditions data provided valuable context used to ensure land use recommendations represented the wants and needs of Sunbury’s existing population.

POPULATION

Between the 2010 and 2020 Census, the City of Niles population decreased by 4.7%, slightly faster than the 3.9% decline in Trumbull County. With a current estimate of 18,433 and 2027 projection of 18,436, population stagnation or a slight decline of a similar rate to Trumbull County is anticipated based on current population trend (Table 2.1). One aim of the Niles Comprehensive Plan is to help the city grow through long-term strategic planning designed towards attracting residents.

Figure 2.2 Niles overview



Source: Esri forecasts for 2022 and 2027. U.S. Census Bureau 2010 decennial Census data converted by Esri into 2020 geography.

Table 2.1 Past, present, and projected future populations

	NILES	TRUMBULL	OHIO
2010 Census	19,353	210,312	11,536,504
2020 Census	18,433	201,977	11,799,448
2027 Projection	18,446	197,721	11,829,083
2022-2027 Growth	-0.17%	-0.19%	0.01%

Source: Esri forecasts for 2022 and 2027. U.S. Census Bureau 2010 decennial Census data converted by Esri into 2020 geography.

AGE

With median ages of 45.4 years and 44.2 years, respectively, Niles and Trumbull County residents are significantly older than the rest of the state at 39.4. Predictably, Niles has a much lower percentage of its population under the age of 18, and higher percentage of the population over the age of 65 (Table 2.2).

Special consideration should be given towards planning for the impacts of aging by promoting senior-friendly policies and attracting new residents. To satisfy the needs of an aging population, communities like Niles should consider investments in diversifying mobility options, building smaller homes in walkable neighborhoods, and ensuring convenient access to health, recreation, and social amenities. In addition to supporting the aging population, communities need to be cognizant of the fiscal impacts of increased health and human services paired with decreases in the pool of working age adults within the City. Helping Niles plan for the future needs of its senior population while concurrently attracting younger families and professionals is another critical component of this comprehensive plan.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Niles residents aged 25 and older have lower levels of education compared to the State population. Over 60% of residents only graduated high school, and just over a quarter completed some form of higher education (Table 2.3).


These figures provide evidence that Niles is experiencing “brain drain,” the inability to attract children who grew up in the city to stay upon graduation. When interviewing current students during the planning process, they revealed that a lack of “things to do,” such as a shopping in downtown, parks and river access, and events are contributing to their desire to locate elsewhere.

Table 2.2 Median age and percent of population in selected age brackets, 2021

	NILES	TRUMBULL	OHIO
Median Age	45.4	44.2	39.4
% Under 18 Years	16.2	20.7	22.3
% Over 65 Years	24.1	21.4	17.0

Source: 2017-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 2.3 Percent of population over 25 years old by highest level of education, 2021



	NILES	TRUMBULL	OHIO
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	10.2	10.8	8.9
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	64.3	62.4	52.6
Associate's degree	6.4	7.5	8.8
Bachelor's degree	13.7	12.6	18.4
Graduate or professional degree	5.5	6.7	11.3

Source: 2017-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates

RACE

Table 2.4 shows that Niles is racially more homogeneous than the the State and county overall, with a greater proportion of white residents and fewer people of color. The largest non-white populations are Black (5.2%), Two or more races (2.8%), and Asian (0.8%).

HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES

Households tend to be smaller in Niles than in Trumbull County and Ohio overall. In all of these geographies, households are shrinking, but Niles has been shrinking at the fastest rate. Across all 3 geographies this figure has declined since 2010, though Niles is declining at a faster rate. Both males and females live alone at high rates, and only 36% of households are married. Reflective of its higher median age, Niles has a higher proportion of senior households and seniors living alone compared to the County and State (Table 2.5).

Table 2.4 Percent of population by race, 2021

	NILES	TRUMBULL	OHIO
White	91.0	88.0	81.2
Black or African American	5.2	8.8	13.3
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.0	0.2	0.3
Asian	0.8	0.6	2.7
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.0	0.0	0.1
2 or more races	2.8	2.3	2.6

Source: 2017-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 2.5 Percent of households by selected characteristics, 2021

HOUSEHOLDS	NILES	
	2010	2020
Total	8,410	8,373
% with Children	27.4	22.9
% with Senior	29.2	38.3
% With Senior Living Alone	16.2	20.3
Average Size	2.3	2.2

Source: 2010 and 2020 US Census

HOUSING

HOUSING BY TYPE

Niles has a greater diversity of housing types compared to Trumbull County and Ohio, but single-family detached structures still dominate the city’s housing stock. The share of single-family attached structures, duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes are similar, but Niles has a significantly higher share of structures with 20+ units (Table 2.6).

HOUSING BY OCCUPANCY

The majority of units are owner-occupied but renting is notably more common in Niles relative to the county and State, with 42% of units occupied by renter (Table 2.7).

There are both positives and negatives associated with this data. Renting can be cheaper in the short-run, however, owning a home is a long-term investment that grows in value.

HOUSING STOCK BY AGE

The median housing unit in Niles was built in 1964, which is lower than the statewide median. Nearly half of the housing in Niles was built prior to 1960, a ratio 9% lower than the State as a whole (Figure 2.3).

Table 2.6 Percent of housing units by type of structure, 2021

	NILES	TRUMBULL	OHIO
1-unit, detached	67.1	76.7	69.0
1-unit, attached	2.8	2.8	4.6
2 units	3.0	3.6	3.9
3 or 4 units	4.3	3.3	4.3
5 to 9 units	4.1	3.1	4.6
10 to 19 units	4.9	2.0	3.9
20 or more units	12.5	3.8	6.0
Mobile home	1.2	4.7	3.6
Other	0.0	0.1	0.0

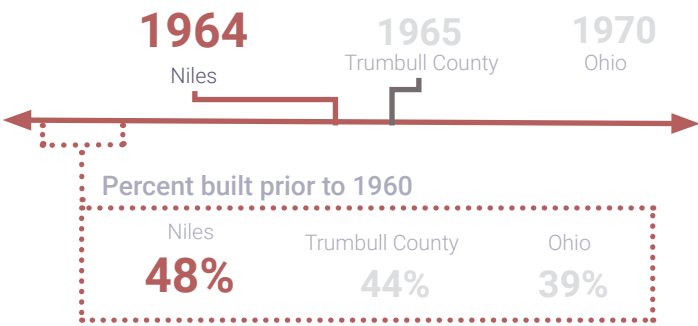
Source: 2017-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 2.7 Percent of total housing units by occupancy status, 2021

	NILES	TRUMBULL	OHIO
Owner-Occupied	51.4	64.2	60.5
Renter-Occupied	37.1	25.7	30.4
Vacant	11.5	10.2	9.1

Source: 2017-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 2.3 Housing units by median year built and percentage built prior to 1960



Source: 2017-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Economics

Niles residents tend to earn lower wages. The median household income and per capita income are lower than both the county and State. The majority of households earn between \$25,000 and \$75,000 annually, with an average of \$58,366. Despite lower earnings, the poverty rate in Niles is much lower than Trumbull County and the State of Ohio (Table 2.8).

INDUSTRY AND OCCUPATION

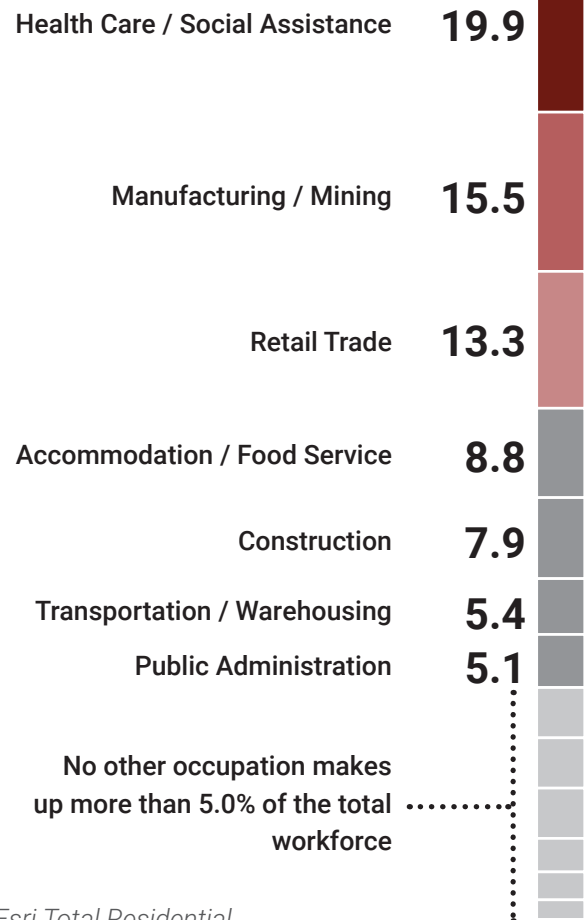
According to the U.S. Census American Community Survey estimates, Educational Services, Health Care and Social Assistance is the most common industry of employment for employed residents of Niles at 19.9%. Combined with Manufacturing and Retail Trade at 15.5% and 13.3%, respectively, these 3 industries employ over half of Niles residents (Figure 2.4).

Table 2.8 Percent of households by income bracket, 2021

	NILES	TRUMBULL	OHIO
Less than \$10,000	6.5	7.2	6.2
\$10,000 to \$14,999	4.7	5.7	4.2
\$15,000 to \$24,999	11.9	11.3	8.7
\$25,000 to \$34,999	14.3	11.4	9.1
\$35,000 to \$49,999	15.0	14.1	12.7
\$50,000 to \$74,999	24.5	19.9	18.0
\$75,000 to \$99,999	8.5	11.4	13.2
\$100,000 to \$149,999	10.0	12.6	15.5
\$150,000 to \$199,999	2.3	3.4	6.3
\$200,000 or more	2.2	2.9	6.2
Median household income (dollars)	45,590	50,258	61,938
Mean household income (dollars)	58,366	65,668	83,820

Source: 2017-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 2.4 Percent of total workers by occupation, 2021



Source: Esri Total Residential Population forecasts for 2022.

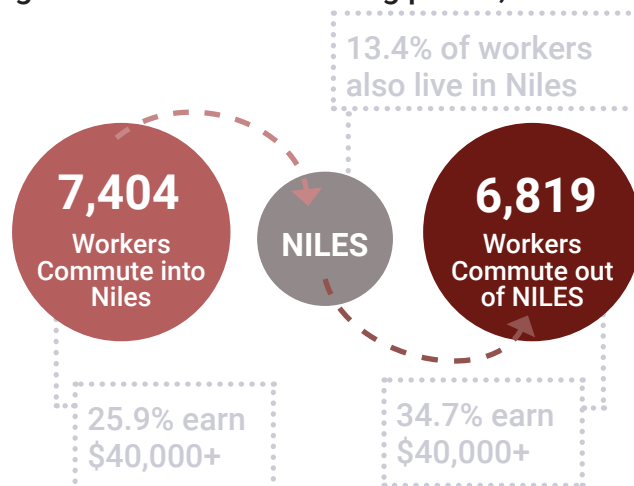
WORKER INFLOW/OUTFLOW

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates about 600 more workers commute into Niles than out for work. About 13.4% of workers also live in the city. Workers commuting out of Niles are more likely to earn greater than \$40,000 than those commuting into the city, indicating a choice to commute in order to find higher paying jobs (Figure 2.5).

JOBS BY LOCATION

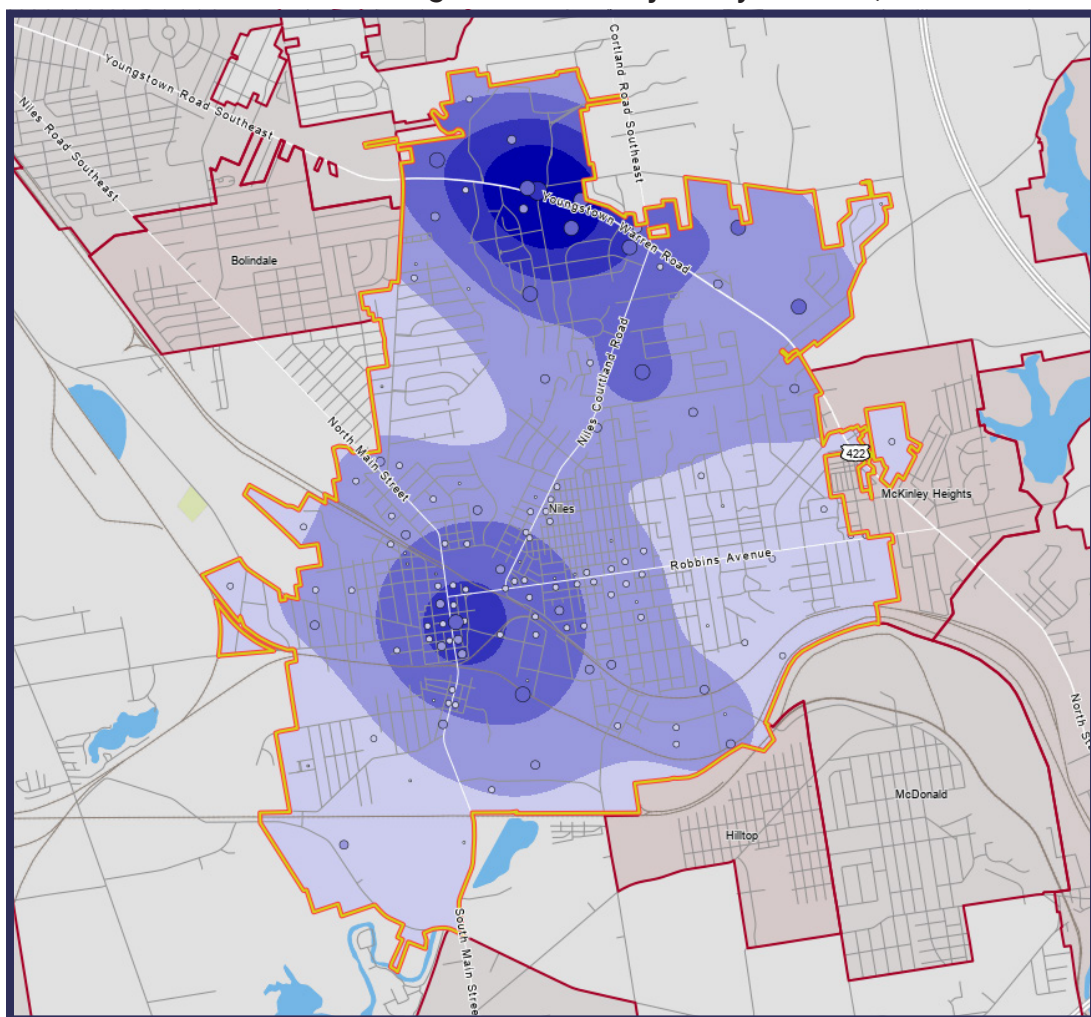
Jobs within Niles are concentrated within its downtown area and along SR 422, a major commercial corridor within the city. Though less concentrated as downtown and SR 422, the city's manufacturing jobs are located along the Mahoning River, along the railroad, and between S. Main Street and Salt Springs Road (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.5 Niles commuting profile, 2019



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (2019)

Figure 2.6 Niles jobs by location, 2019



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (2019)

TRANSPORTATION

Figure 2.9 on the following page is a map of the city's roadway network.

The City of Niles is bisected by 2 major arterial corridors - U.S. 422 (Figure 2.7) from east to west and SR 46 (Figure 2.8) from north to south. Located along these corridors are the majority of the city's commercial areas, including downtown Niles. Because of the truck route along SR 46, streetscape elements and revitalization efforts in downtown Niles should take into consideration their impact on truck traffic. U.S. 82, known as the Warren Outerbelt runs north of Niles and is connected to the city via SR 46.

U.S. 422 is the primary means of travel between Warren and Niles. Additionally, the corridor connects Niles to Girard and eventually the Madison Ave Expressway in Youngstown.

Other minor arterials run throughout the city, all of which converge in downtown Niles, allowing for easy access to the district. These roads and the major corridors are connected by various major collector roads, especially in the southern portion of the city.



Figure 2.7 U.S. 422 commercial corridor



Figure 2.8 S.R. 46 in downtown Niles

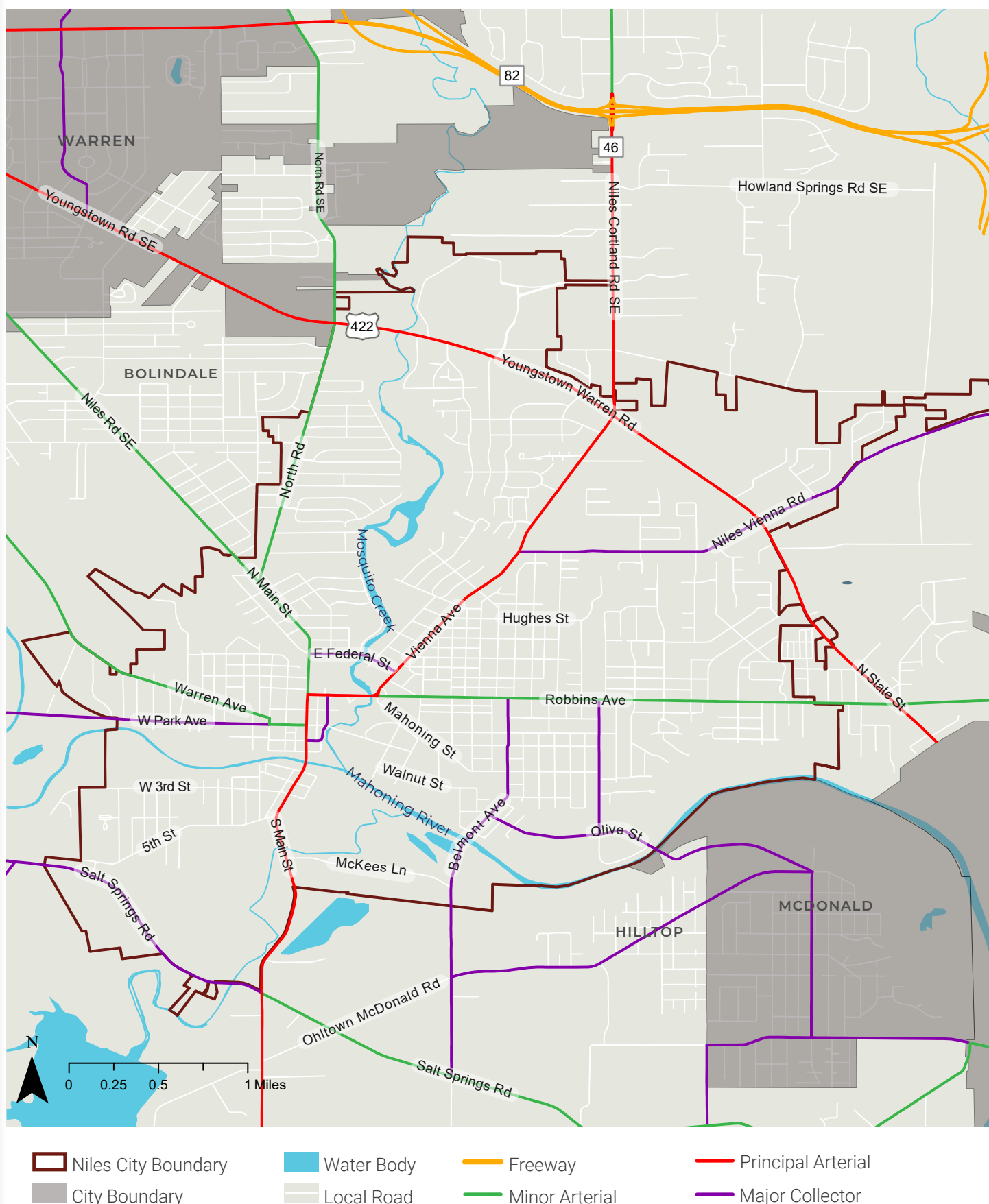


Figure 2.9 Niles roadways by functional class, 2023 (Source: ODOT)

ENVIRONMENTAL

Figures 2.12 and 2.13 on the following pages are maps of floodplain and wetlands.

FLOODPLAINS

The Mahoning River and Mosquito Creek (Figures 2.10 and 2.11) present flooding risks within the city. A particular area of importance is Mosquito Creek between U.S. 422 and downtown Niles, where the floodplain is at its widest. Multiple industrial areas are located within the Mahoning River's long term floodplains, specifically east of downtown Niles.

WETLANDS

Wetlands are defined as areas where water covers soil all year or during periods throughout the year. Their saturated soils create excellent conditions for many varieties of grasses to grow which host many insects and amphibians. Within the City of Niles, forested and shrub wetlands are the most common, with the largest located directly south of the confluence of the Mahoning River and Mosquito Creek.

Wetlands are extremely important to the water quality of surrounding bodies of water because they have interceptive properties that allow pollutants to be blocked from entering waterways. Wetlands have the ability to process, remove, transform, and store pollutants as sediment, nitrogen, phosphorus, and heavy metals. Due to their high and long-term capacity to filter pollutants are critical to the health and biodiversity of all watersheds.



Figure 2.10 Mahoning River in Niles



Figure 2.11 Mosquito Creek in Niles
(Source: WBKN)

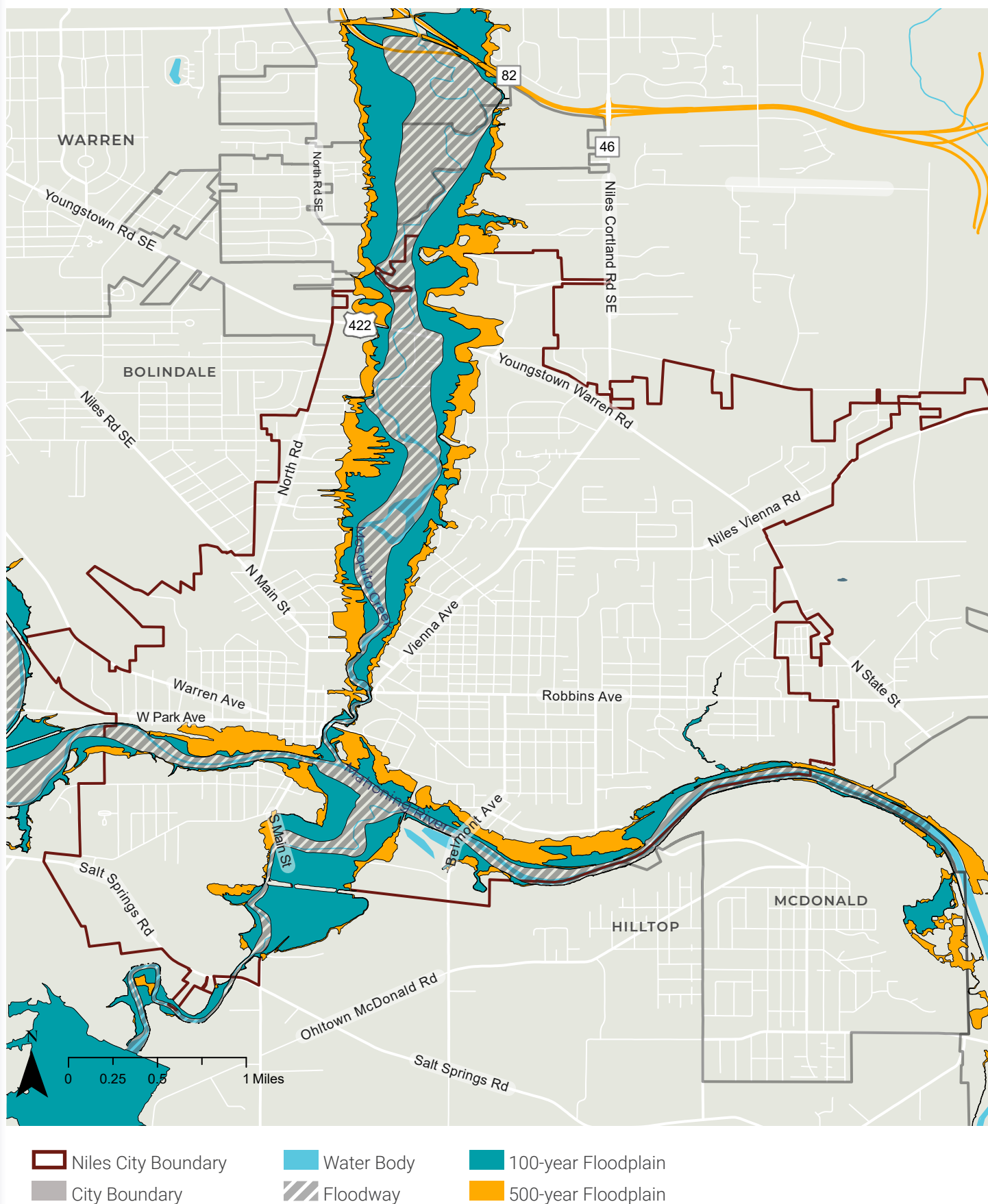


Figure 2.12 Figure 2.9 | Floodplains

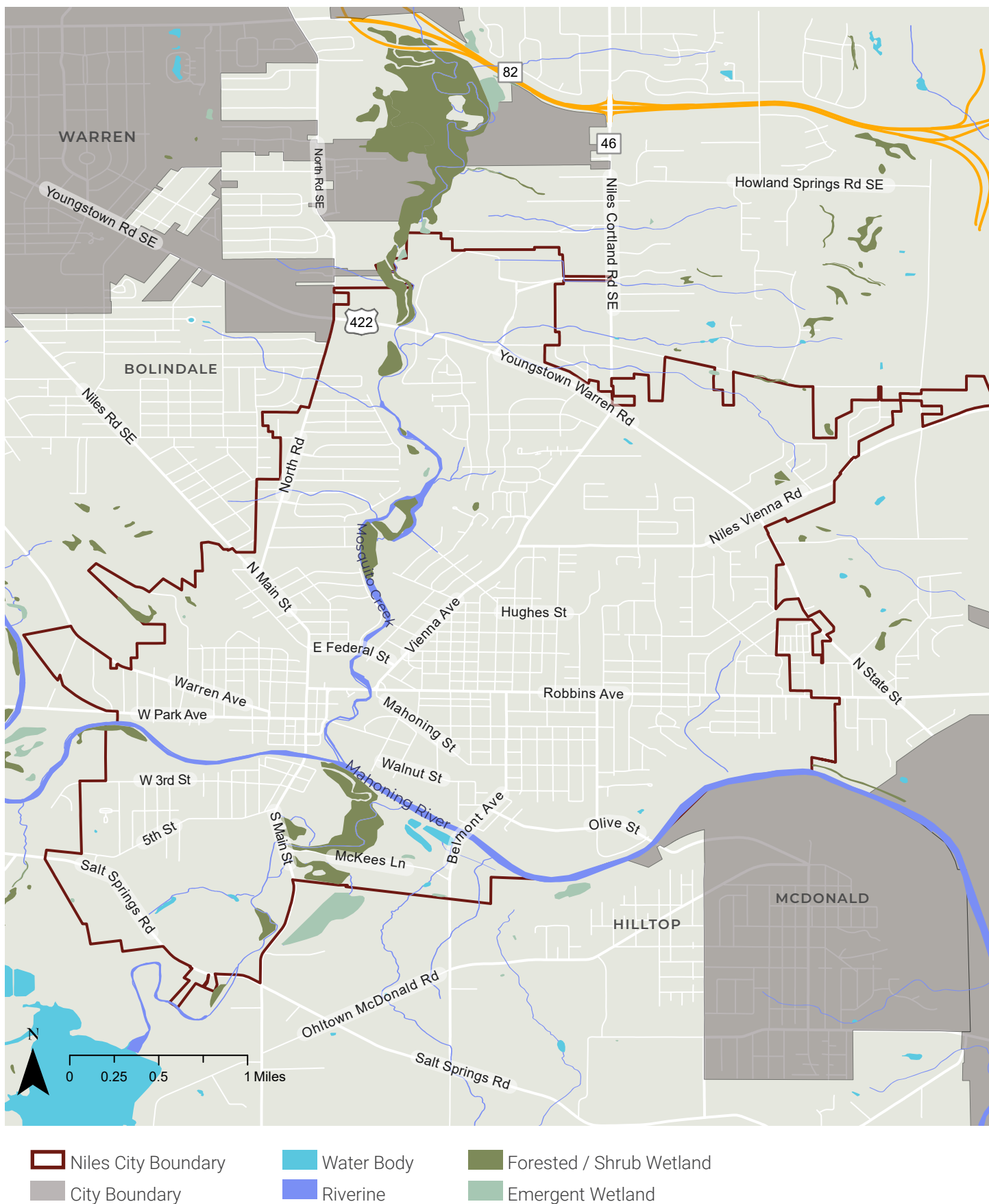


Figure 2.13 Figure 2.10 | Wetlands

PARKS AND RECREATION

The City of Niles operates 7 parks, ranging in both size and amenities available. The largest of which, Waddell Park, is where the Niles Wellness and Recreational Center is located, which hosts various programs including fitness classes, youth leagues, and clinics (figure 2.14).

While both Hetz Park and Kennedy Park exist along the Mosquito Creek, no parks are located along the Mahoning River in Niles.

NILES GREENWAY TRAIL

Beginning within Downtown Niles and eventually connecting to communities such as Canfield and Austintown, the Niles Greenway (Figure 2.15) is a major regional recreational asset. Known as the Mill Creek Bikeway once it leaves the boundaries of Trumbull County, the rail to trail project was completed in 2012 and includes a trailhead with a pavilion, restrooms, and parking off Church St in Downtown Niles.

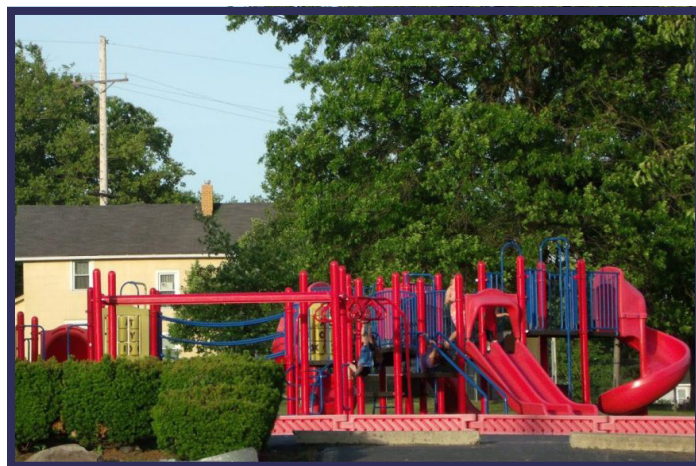


Figure 2.14 Waddell Park (Source: City of Niles)



Figure 2.15 Niles Greenway

III. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- » Overview
- » Survey Results

Overview

Public input was integral throughout the planning process, displayed in Figure 3.1. Frequent coordination and feedback from city officials took place at bi-weekly meetings during the entire process and helped guide the engagement phase.

A steering committee was assembled, consisting of important community representatives and stakeholders, to guide the planning process and ensure the Final Plan fulfilled the community’s present needs and future vision.

Regular appearances at public events provided the opportunity to provide the community with updates and gather their feedback on various aspects of the final plan. These events were selected due to high attendance to maximize feedback and often involved a pop-up booth with interactive boards and activities.

Additionally, several Niles Comprehensive Plan-specific events were hosted as well, designed to gather feedback from the most-interested members of the public.

Appendix A on features individual summaries for each event shown in Figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1 Public engagement timeline

Online Survey

OVERVIEW

The online survey was open from the end of November, 2022 to the beginning of April, 2023. 334 responses were submitted in total. Survey respondents were asked about the existing conditions in Niles, what topics the comprehensive plan should address, and what they thought the top priorities should be.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF RESPONDENTS

As figure 3.2 displays, 89 percent of survey respondents live in Niles and 27 percent work in Niles. 41 respondents (12%) reported that they visit Niles often and 58 percent have family and friends in Niles. Of the 12 respondents that answered “other” in response to their relationship to Niles, five have children that attend Niles schools and three grew up in Niles, but no longer live in town.

The majority of respondents (50%) are between the ages of 35 and 54, 19 percent are 55 to 64, 13 percent are 25 to 34, and 10 percent are over the age of 65. About two thirds of survey respondents were female (65%) and 90 percent of respondents are white. Responses were well distributed across the income spectrum (Figures 3.3-3.6).

Most survey respondents reported being married with children and 11 percent of respondents said they were unmarried in a household with multiple occupants. The survey did not make a distinction between roommates, unmarried couples or other household makeups, but several of the respondents that indicated “other” specified that they were single with children (2%). Figure 3.7 shows the household types reported by survey respondents.

Based on reported demographic information, survey respondents are representative of Niles income and racial demographics, but households with children are over-represented in the data compared to Niles as a whole. Paired with the high percentage of women that responded to the survey, it is reasonable to assume that mothers of children in Niles make up a sizable portion

Figure 3.2 Total number of survey respondents by relationship to Niles



Figure 3.3 Percent of survey respondents by age

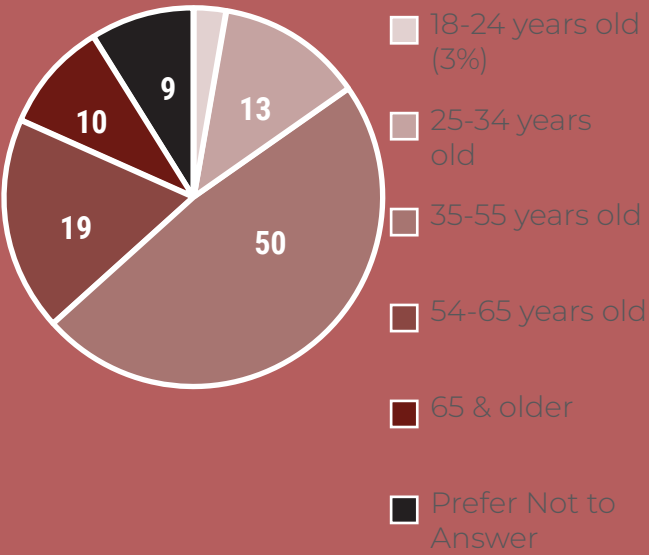
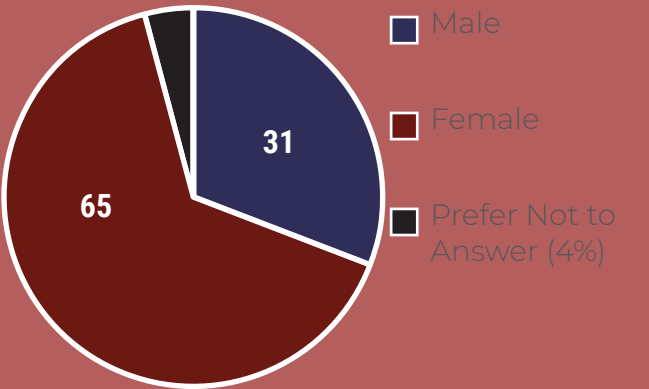


Figure 3.4 Percent of survey respondents by gender



of respondents and results may reflect that perspective.

PLAN TOPICS

Figure 3.8 shows the topics respondents thought the plan should cover. The top three topics respondents thought it was important for the plan to address were the economy (86%), housing (62%), and the environment (57%). Common topics indicated in “other” answers were parks and recreation, the school system, blight and/or crime, and improving confidence in the local government.

NILES PRIORITIES

When asked what the top three priorities for Niles should be, the top priorities were: attracting new local businesses and jobs (75%), enhancing park and recreation amenities (65%), improving transportation safety and infrastructure (65%), retaining existing residents and attracting new residents (53%), and lastly preserving the natural environment (24%). Again, schools and addressing blighted or poorly maintained properties were frequently mentioned in “other” answers (Figure 3.9).

HOUSING

The survey addressed housing and utility needs and found that slightly over half of respondents believe their current needs are met and will be met in the future (Figures 3.11-3.12). Less than 10% felt their needs weren’t met and wouldn’t be met in the future. Notably, 21% said their current housing needs are met but not expected to be in the future, likely due to rising costs and a preference for walkable, mixed-use housing. The top priorities for housing in Niles include constructing sidewalks and trails, developing new housing options, and increasing access to parks, reflecting a desire for walkable neighborhoods (Figure 3.13). Respondents also frequently mentioned concerns about housing and utility affordability.

Figure 3.5 Percent of survey respondents by race

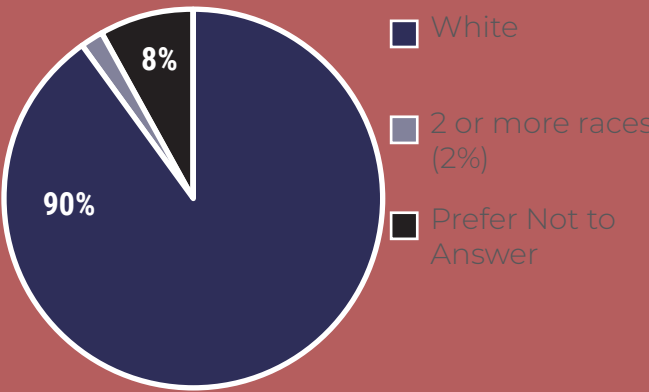


Figure 3.6 Percent of survey respondents by income

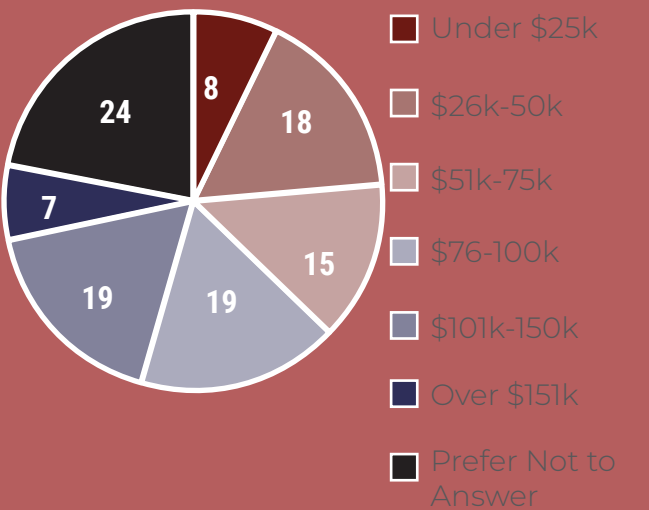
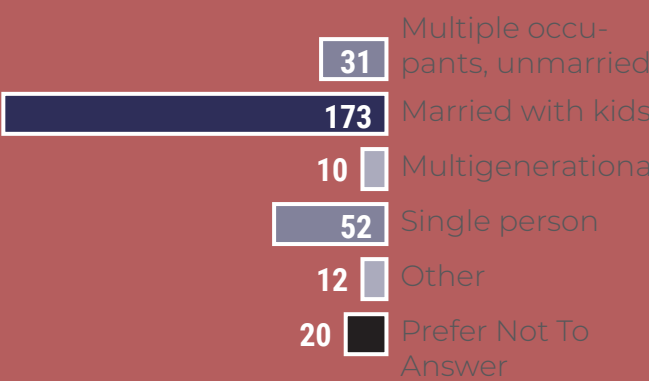


Figure 3.7 Number of survey respondents by type of household



RECREATION

Access to recreational opportunities is a rising trend in planning. The survey responses indicate that this holds true for Niles. More than half of respondents said their needs in regards to parks and open spaces were not currently being met, but responses were split whether respondents felt they would be met in the future (Figure 3.14). The top priority for parks and open spaces is improving the quality of existing parks, suggesting that people feel that there are opportunities for recreation in Niles that just need to be updated or maintained (Figure 3.15). The next most frequently selected priorities, with more than 50 percent each, are creating more recreational opportunities on the Mahoning River, increasing recreational programming, and making it easier to walk or bike to existing parks. The most common response in "other" answers were comments about upgrading or improving maintenance of existing facilities.

DOWNTOWN

The survey focused on understanding how people in Niles utilize downtown, revealing that roughly 25% visit weekly, 25% visit a few times a year, and 13% never visit (Figure 3.18). The majority, 84%, expressed a desire for more restaurants and shops to encourage more frequent visits. Additionally, beautification and community events were important to 50% of respondents (Figure 3.19).

Figure 3.8 What are the three most important topics the Niles Comprehensive Plan should address?

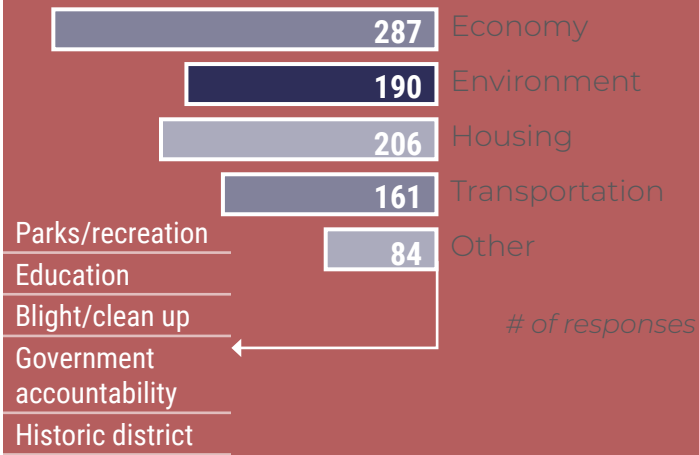


Figure 3.9 What are the three most important priorities for Niles?

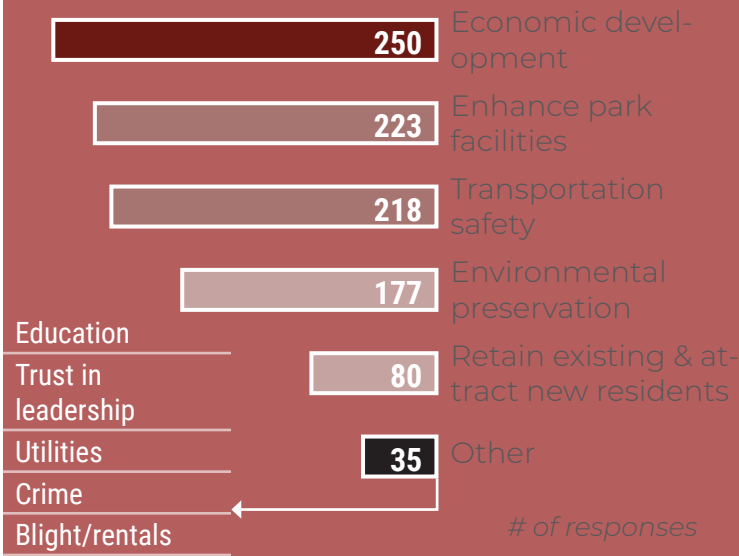


Figure 3.10 What are the three most important development priorities for Niles?

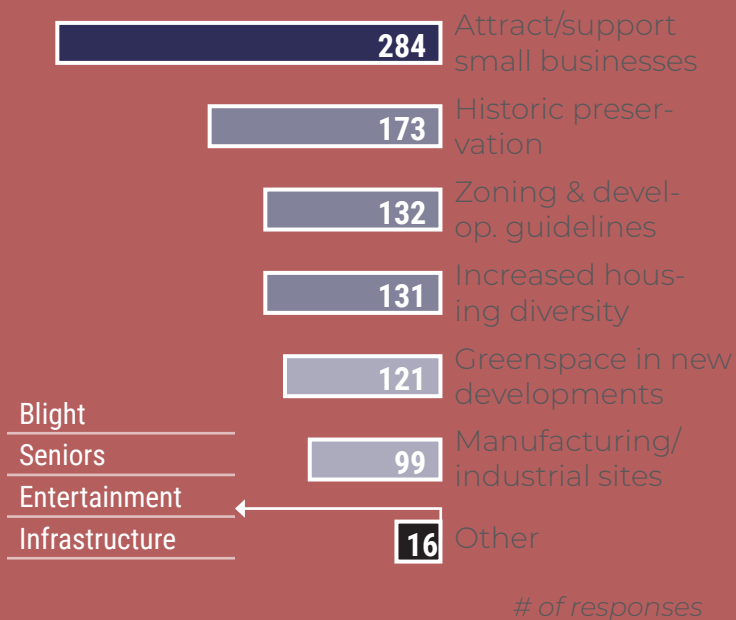


Figure 3.12 How does the City of Niles' housing stock fit your needs?

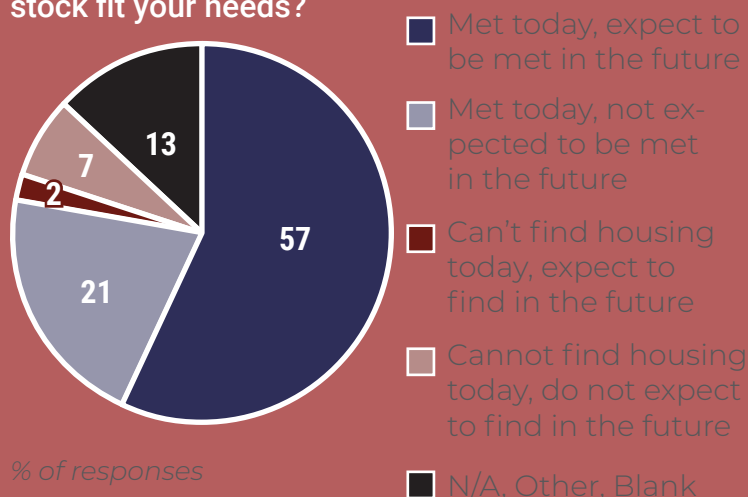


Figure 3.11 How do the City of Niles' utilities meet your needs?

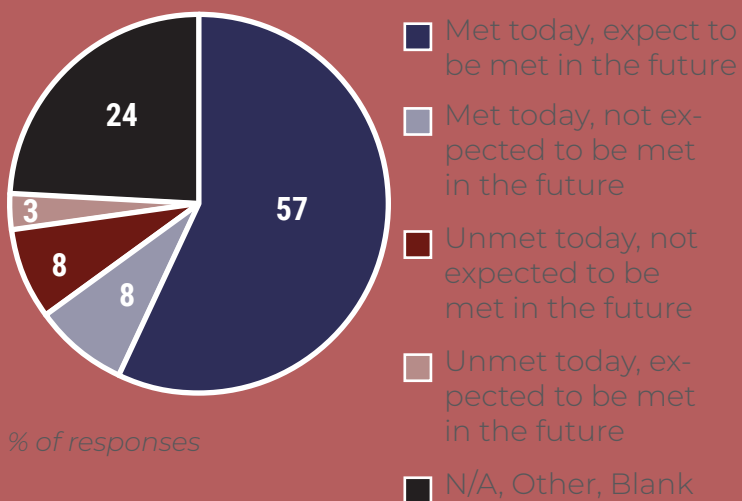


Figure 3.13 What are the three most important priorities regarding housing in Niles?

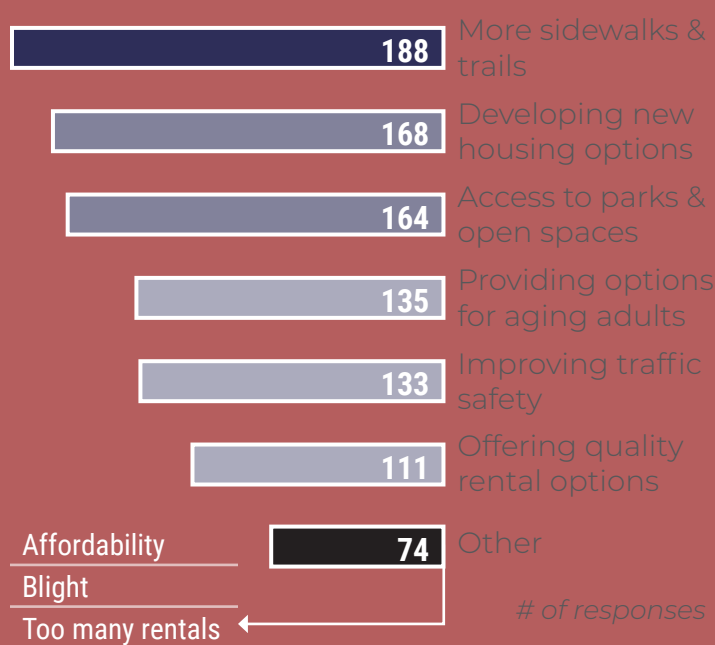
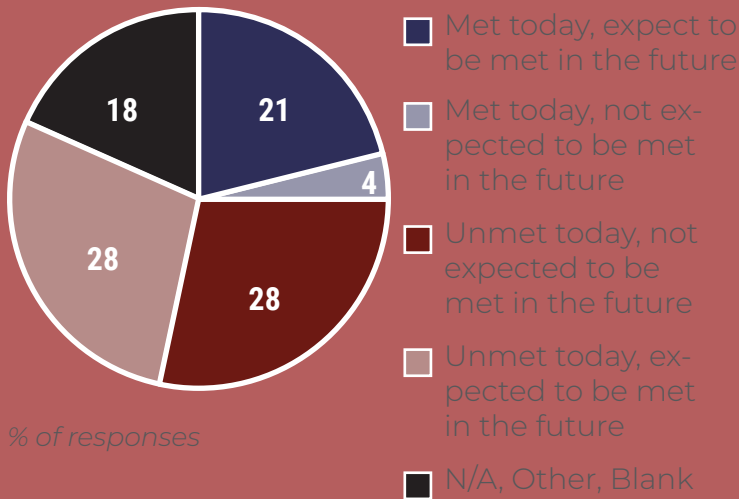
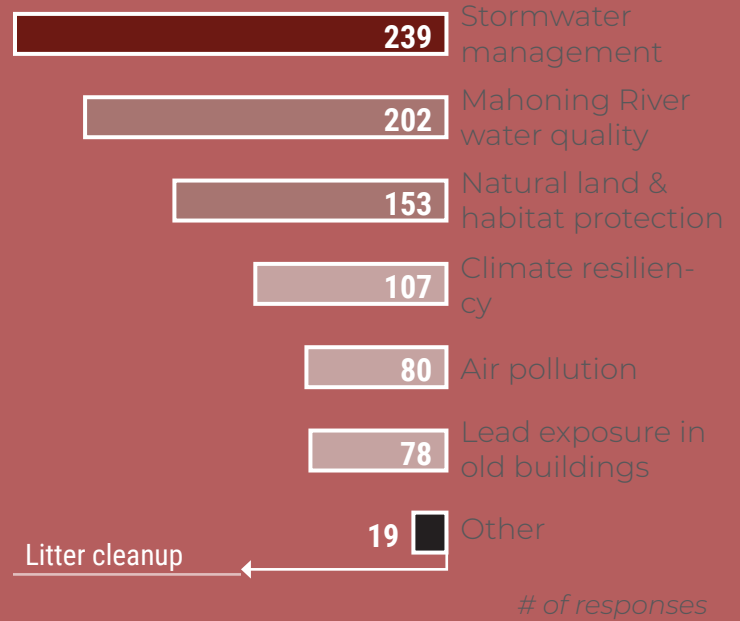


Figure 3.14 How does the current park system and Wellness Center fit your needs?



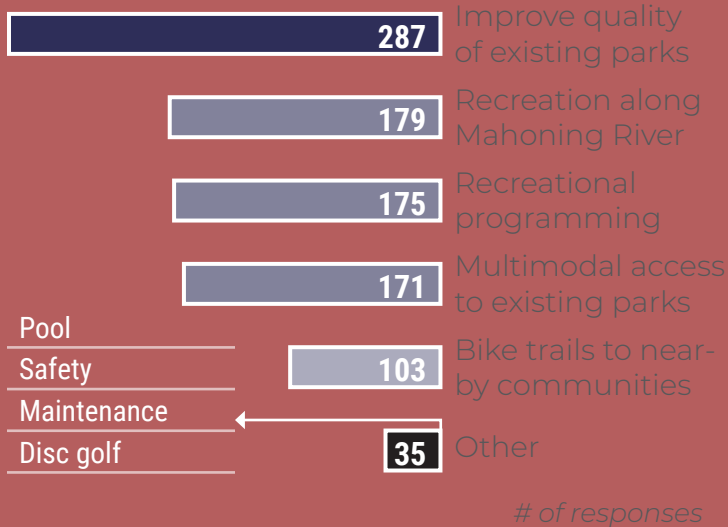
% of responses

Figure 3.16 What are the three most important environmental priorities in Niles?



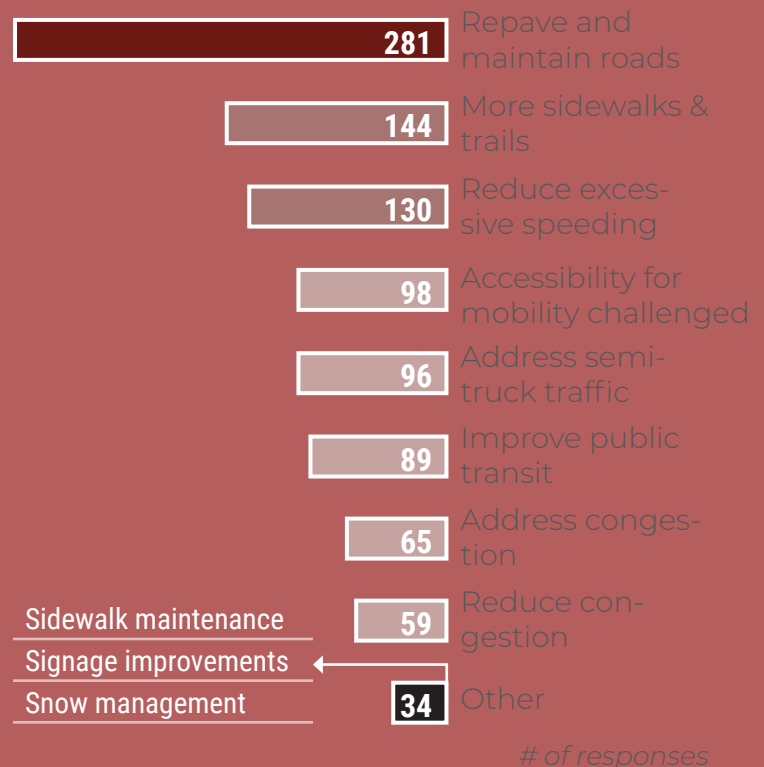
of responses

Figure 3.15 What are the three most important priorities regarding parks in Niles?



of responses

Figure 3.17 What are the three most important transportation priorities in Niles?



of responses

Figure 3.18 How often do you visit downtown Niles?

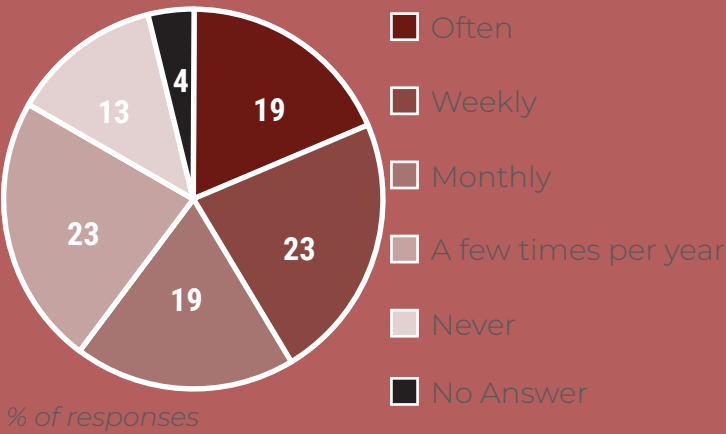


Figure 3.19 What would make you visit downtown more often?

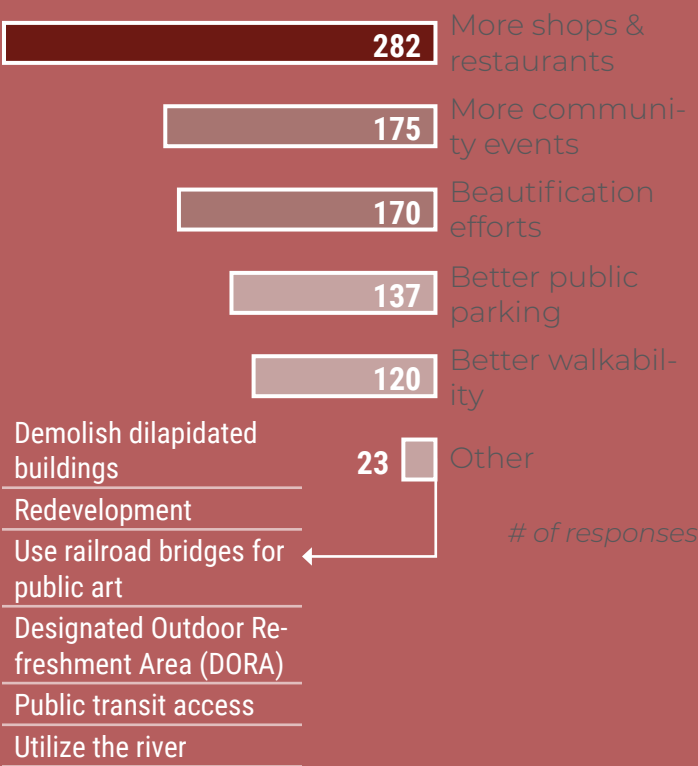


Figure 3.20 Pop-up engagement event at the McKinley Memorial Library Strawberry Festival

IV. LAND USE

- » Existing Land Use & Zoning
- » Recommended Future Land Use Districts
- » Priority Development Areas

OVERVIEW

The recommended future land use districts found in this chapter will be used to influence future decisions regarding zoning in the City of Niles. Zoning governs the types of buildings and uses allowed on city land. How Niles property owners, including the City and private developers, use their land is both an organic process and a deliberate response to regulation and investment. In this way, Niles codes, policies, and the overall attitude toward development shape how the community evolves over time. Formation of a cohesive and coherent vision for the future of land use and development strengthens the impact of improvements, provides stability for property owners, garners a sense of community, and improves the overall quality of life for Niles residents.

This chapter explores existing land use patterns in Niles, summarizes the community vision for the future of land use, and provides strategies to work toward that vision. Three overarching objectives for land use recommendations emerged in the planning process (Figure 4.1). The recommended future land use map and accompanying district descriptions at the end of the chapter should be used to influence the city's future zoning decisions.

KEY FINDINGS

- » Clustering of commercial uses along U.S. 422
- » Dominance of single-family detached housing
- » Lack of riverfront recreational opportunities or sites

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

- 1 ATTRACT AND SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES
- 2 REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN NILES
- 3 EXPAND HOUSING OPTIONS TO RETAIN AND ATTRACT RESIDENTS
- 4 INCREASE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ALONG THE MAHONING RIVER

Figure 4.1 Key findings and objectives

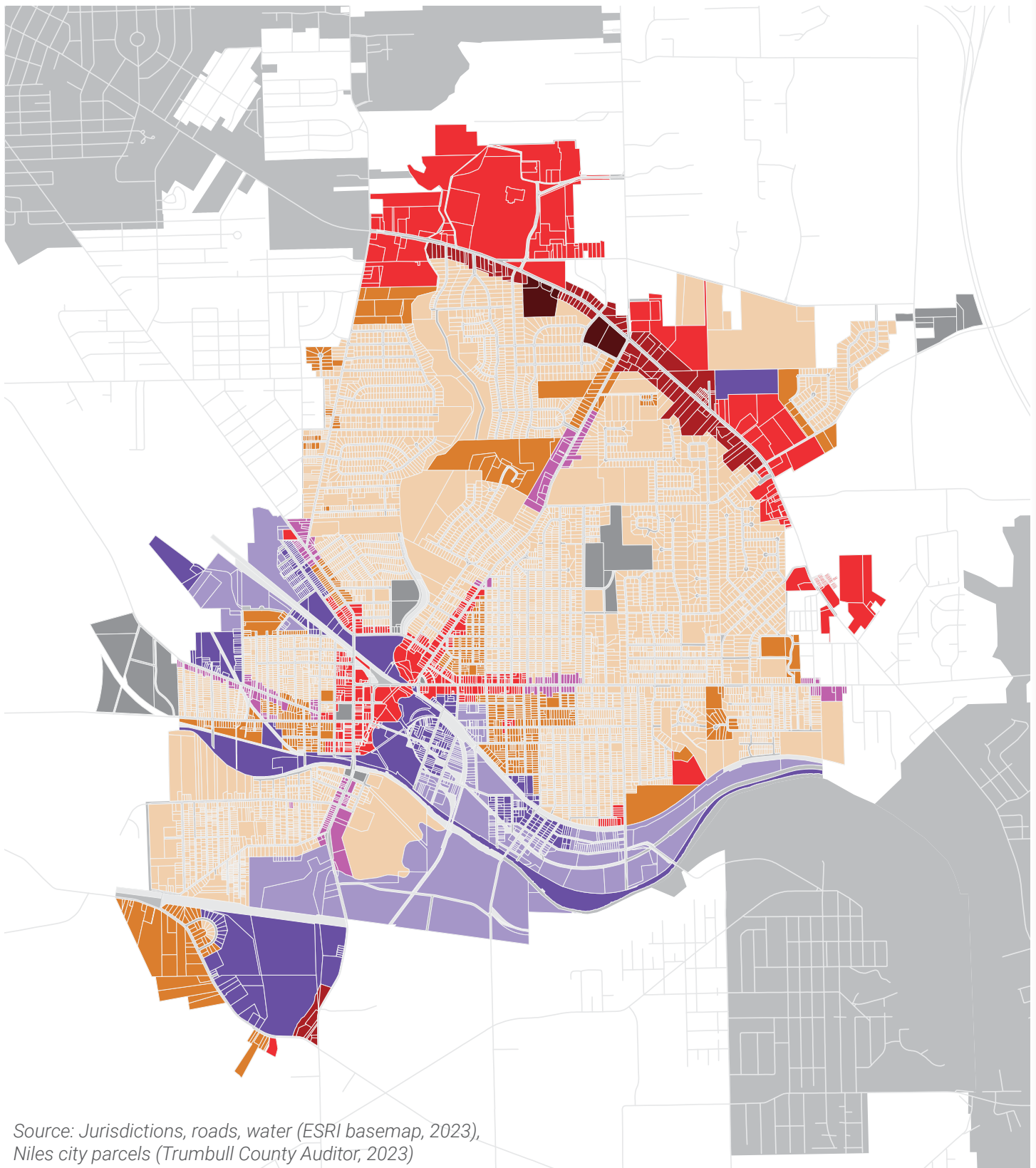
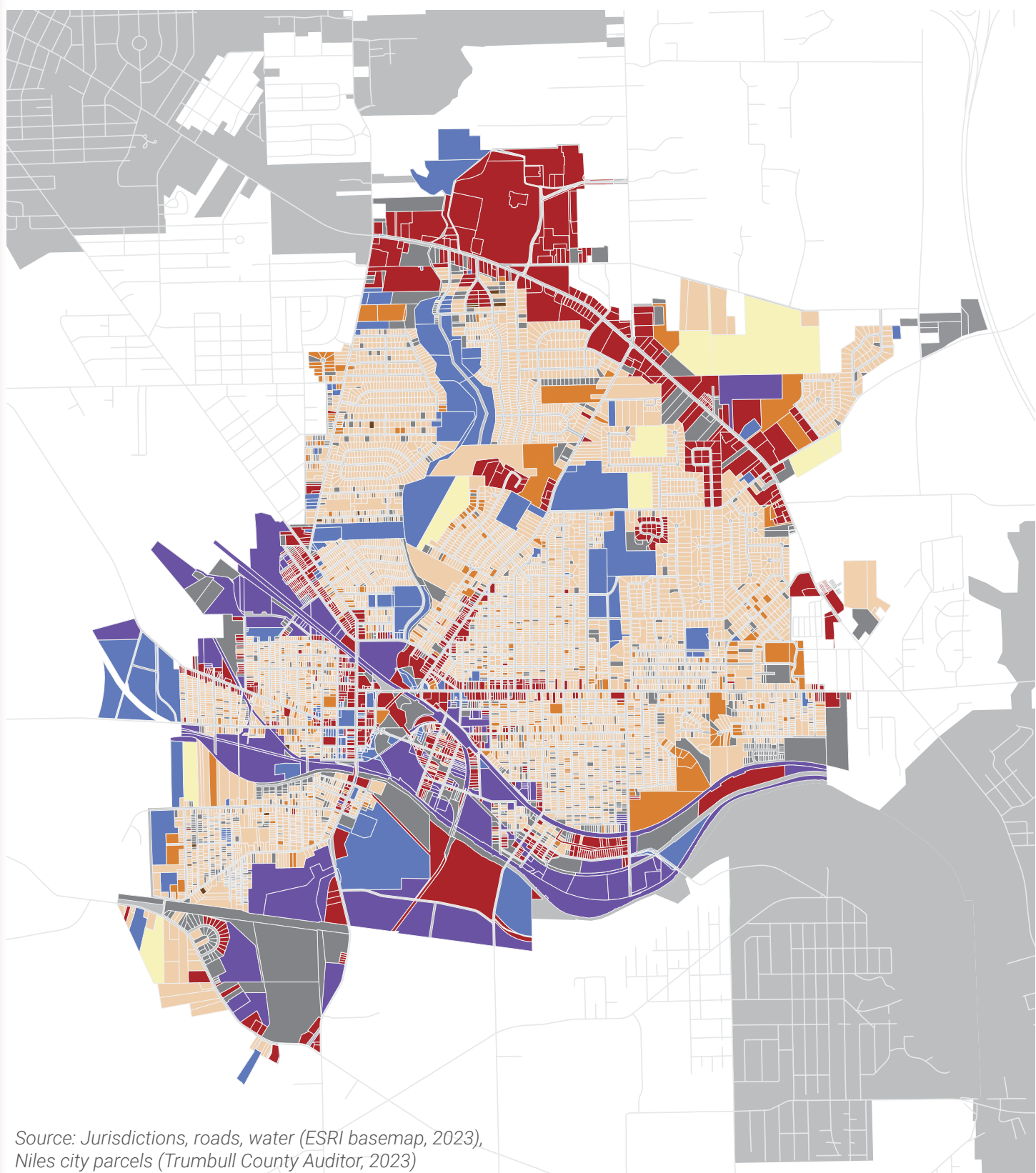


Figure 4.2 City of Niles parcels by existing zoning district



- | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Niles City Boundary | Residential | Multi-family Residential | Industrial/Manufacturing |
| City Boundary | Commercial | Institutional | Vacant |
| Water Body | Agricultural | | |

Figure 4.3 City of Niles parcels by existing land use classification (2023)

EXISTING RESIDENTIAL

The vast majority of residential land in Niles is zoned for single-family detached residential. Areas where multi-family residential is permitted include neighborhoods along Robbins Ave, N Main St, and W Park St near Downtown and along Salt Springs Rd.

EXISTING COMMERCIAL

Commercial uses in Niles currently exist along the U.S. 422 corridor, downtown, and rarely elsewhere.

DOWNTOWN NILES

There is no zoning district specifically for Downtown Niles or an overlay district. Instead, downtown is included in the General Commercial district, which is not designed for the type of walkable, mixed-use development desired in Downtown Niles.

EXISTING INDUSTRIAL

Land used for industrial and manufacturing in Niles is found along the Mahoning River and along the railroad.

EXISTING PARKLAND

The city parks system consists of 7 parks which are relatively evenly distributed across Niles and range in size and variety of uses. Waddell Park, located on the west side, is the largest park both in size and amount of recreational opportunities, including its state of the art wellness center.

Despite being the most prominent geographical feature within the city, no parks or trails exist along the Mahoning River.

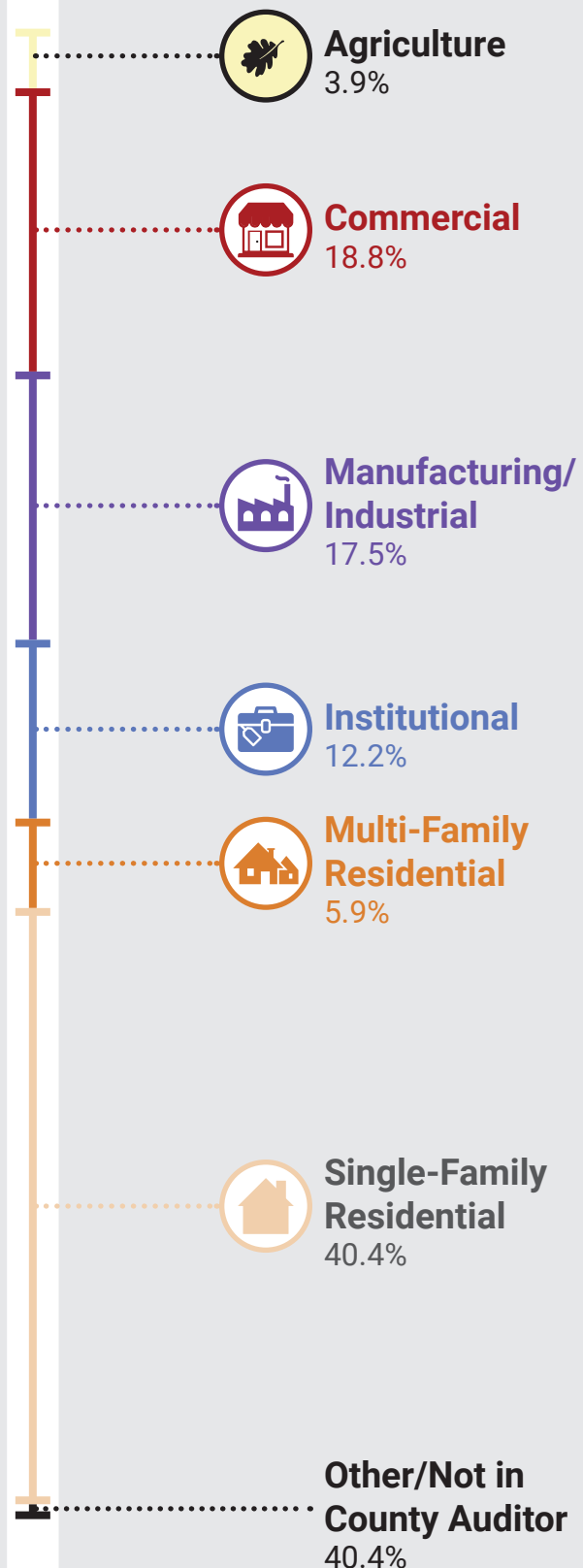


Figure 4.4 Percent of Niles' land by use classification

FUTURE LAND USE

COMMUNITY INPUT

Input from the community directly influenced the creation of the future land use districts found later in this chapter. Land use was a main topic at two steering committee meetings, at which members worked with the consultant team to lay out priorities and district specifications. Open houses and appearances at local events gave the public opportunities to give feedback on what uses they would like to see expanded or reduced and where. Feedback from the community survey also influenced future land use recommendations.

Generally speaking, the Niles community would like to see:

- » the growth of local retail and dining,
- » a broader range of housing options,
- » more senior housing locations,
- » and more land along the Mahoning River designated as parks.

The three following topics were commonly heard across all forms of engagement.

Commercial

Across nearly all engagement opportunities, attracting local businesses was the top priority from the public.

Downtown Niles

The public was presented with a wide variety of housing choices and responded with an overwhelming preference for mixed-use apartments with retail below.

Alongside increasing the amount of permanent retail and restaurants in downtown, accommodating food trucks was another popular response.

Parks

Improving the existing parks was the top priority according to the community survey with increased access to the Mahoning being second.

METHODOLOGY

The future land use map addressed Niles top priorities as revealed by feedback received from city officials and the community. How these priorities influenced the recommended land use districts are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Attracting Local Businesses

While bringing local businesses to Downtown Niles is a priority, the future land use expands potential locations to corridors along major arterials. These proposed corridors permit neighborhood-scale businesses to be located near housing, giving small-business owners a local customer base within a walkable distance to increase long-term sustainability of businesses.

Demand-Focused Housing

The majority of parcels are zoned Residential-A, which only permits single-family detached housing. In order to grant developers more flexibility to meet changing housing demands, the future land use map proposes only 2 districts, one which permits single-family attached and detached, and another which allows a wide range of housing options.

An aging population and decreasing household size provide evidence for a potential demand for smaller units, which are easier to construct under the new proposed districts.

Enhancing the Mahoning River

The existing land along the Mahoning River consists of parcels used for industrial and manufacturing, though a moderate amount sit vacant. In line with the community's vision for riverfront recreational opportunities, the future land use map identifies these parcels as potential future parks.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

In general, the future land use map resembles the zoning, but the districts become more flexible to allow for more variety in development to occur.

For a brief summary of the changes, view the graphic below. The center column displays the existing zoning districts. The left and right columns show the future land use districts, with arrows corresponding to how the parcels are classified based on their zoning district.

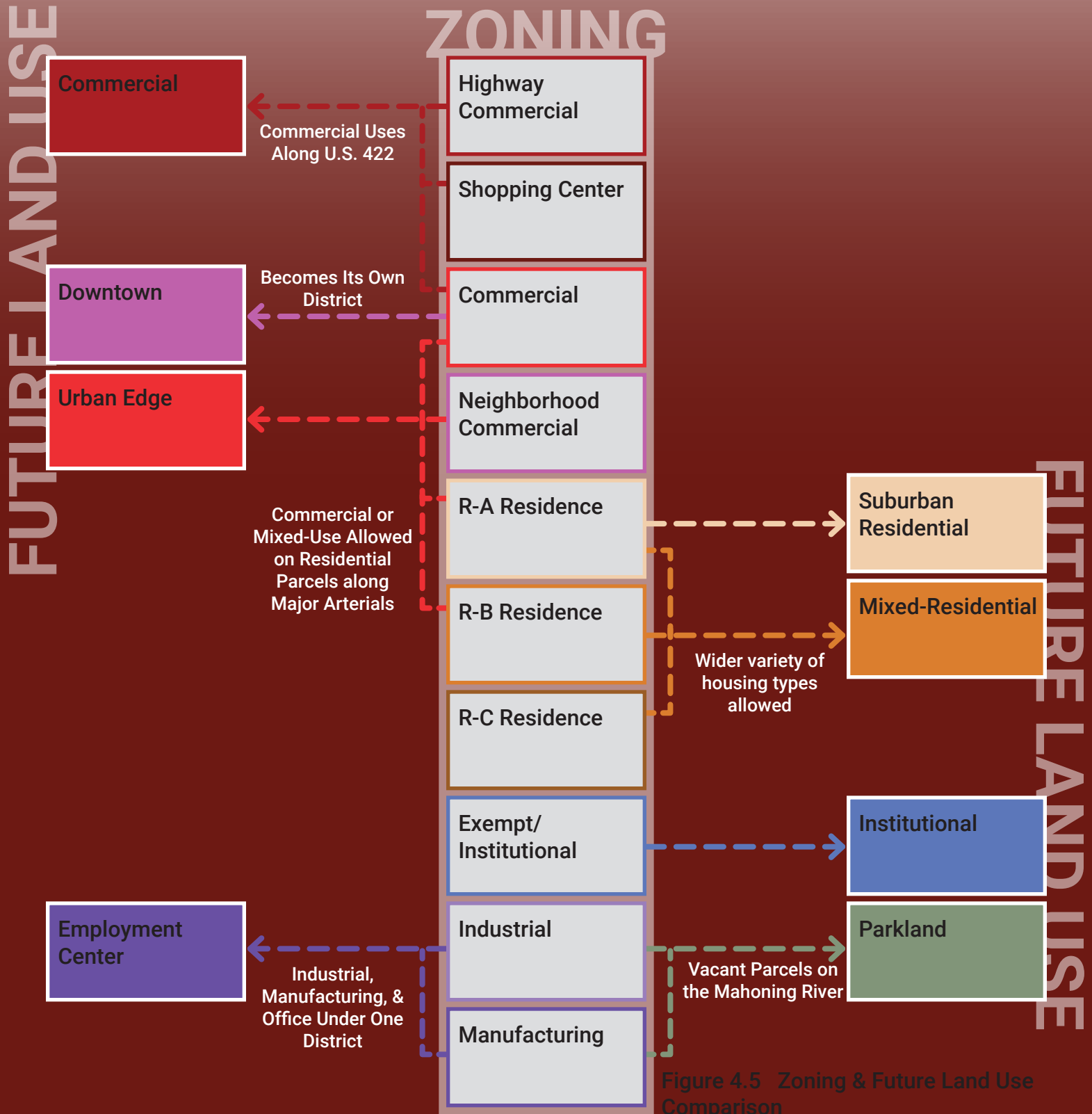
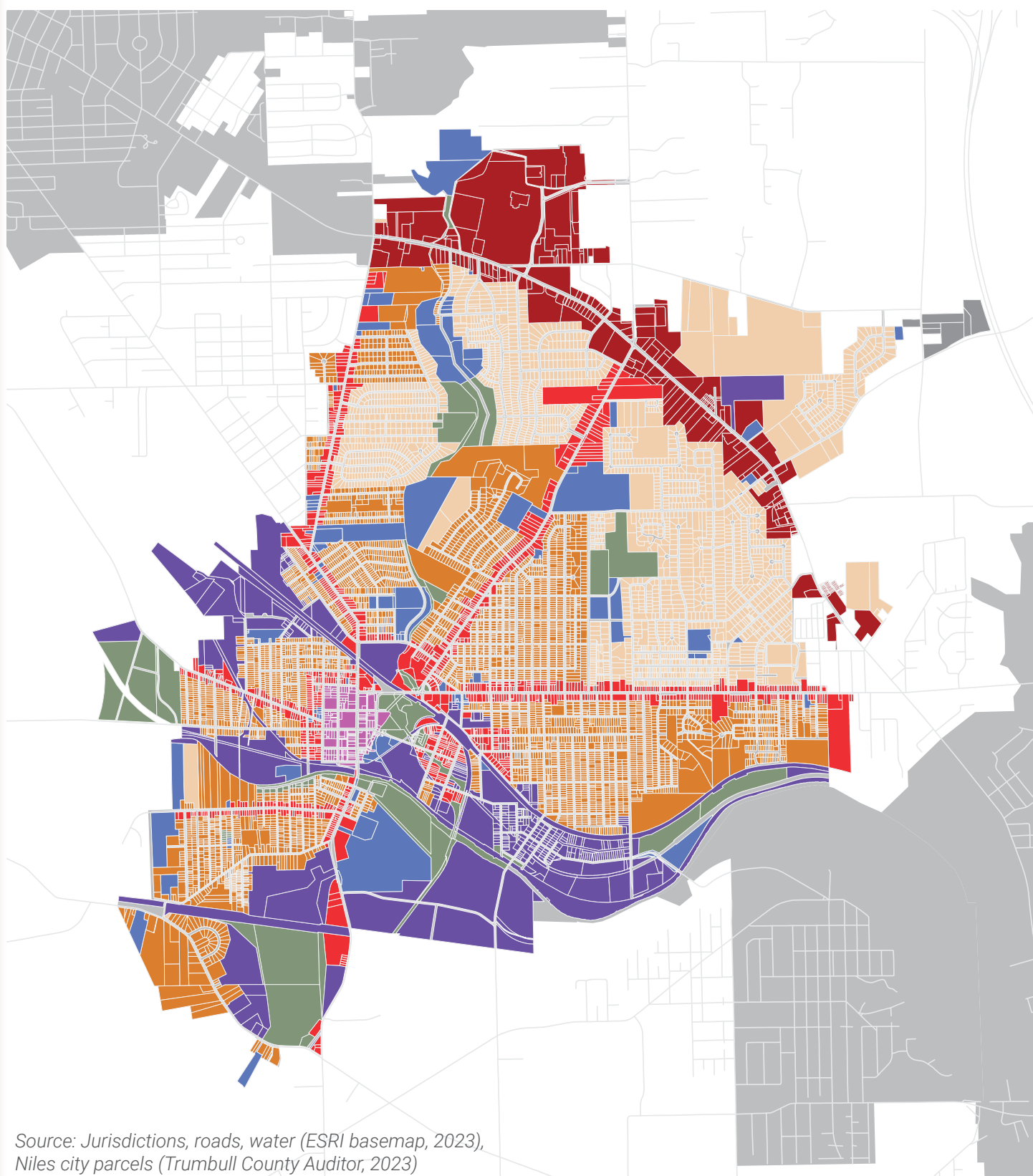


Figure 4.5 Zoning & Future Land Use Comparison



Source: Jurisdictions, roads, water (ESRI basemap, 2023),
Niles city parcels (Trumbull County Auditor, 2023)

- | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Niles City Boundary | Downtown | Urban Edge | Institutional |
| City Boundary | Suburban Residential | Commercial | Parkland |
| | Mixed-Residential | Employment Center | |

Figure 4.6 City of Niles parcels by recommended future land use

DOWNTOWN

Downtown Niles should become its own land use district in order to propose the most intensive and dense development in the city. Development should support walkability through minimal building setbacks and rear or side located parking lots. Mixed-use buildings are preferred, with apartments over first floor retail.

The district should have its own unique branding to create a strong sense of place. This branding should be integrated into any streetscaping elements such as benches, arches, bike racks, planter boxes, etc.

DISTRICT SUMMARY

- » Mixed-Use
- » Walkable
- » Unique Branding



DENSITY

15 units/AC (minimum)
10k sq ft/AC (minimum)



MAX HEIGHT

100 ft



FRONT SETBACK

0-20 ft



MAX LOT COVERAGE

None



PARKING

- » Located at the rear or sides of buildings
- » Public parking available



PERMITTED USES

- » Office
- » Retail & Restaurants
- » Multi-Family Residential
- » Institutional
- » Mixed-Use encouraged

Figure 4.7 Downtown district parcels

SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

The Suburban Residential land use classification describes the existing neighborhoods in Niles which contain homes located on larger lots and are often characterized by a curvilinear street pattern or longer blocks. As a result, these areas are less dense and less walkable, meaning special consideration should be made with regards to connectivity with well-maintained sidewalks.

Though single family detached housing is the most common existing housing, a variety of housing options including condos, duplexes, and townhomes up to 4 units per building should be permitted along with senior housing.

DISTRICT SUMMARY

- » Range of 1-4 unit housing styles
- » Well-connected by roads and sidewalks



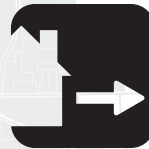
DENSITY

1-5 units/AC



MAX HEIGHT

35 ft



FRONT SETBACK

20-60 ft



MAX LOT COVERAGE

50%



PARKING

- » Residential driveways
- » Curb cut widths



PERMITTED USES

- » Single family detached
- » Single family attached
- » Senior living
- » Accessory Dwelling Units
- » Parks
- » Schools

Figure 4.8 Suburban-Residential district parcels

MIXED-RESIDENTIAL

The Mixed-Residential land use classification describes the existing neighborhoods in Niles which contain homes located on smaller lots along gridded streets with smaller blocks. Given proper consideration to streetscape and roadway amenities and infrastructure, these areas can support walkability.

The results of the existing conditions analysis and public engagement revealed a demand for smaller, entry level homes and rental options for the aging and working class existing population and younger families which the city hopes to attract. While the construction of single-family detached is still permitted in the district, condos, duplexes, townhomes, and apartments are encouraged especially on smaller lots.

Additionally, community feedback revealed a desire for the growth of local businesses, within which the mixed-residential district permits at a small scale in the form of uses such as corner coffee shops and in-home businesses.

DISTRICT SUMMARY

- » Residential development aimed at walkability
- » Small-scale, very low intensity commercial permitted



DENSITY
5-20 units/AC



MAX HEIGHT
60 ft



FRONT SETBACK
10-30 ft



MAX LOT COVERAGE
80%



PARKING

- » Residential driveways
- » Located to the side or rear of the building
- » Curbside pickup zones
- » Shared access, when appropriate



PERMITTED USES

- » Single family detached
- » Single family attached
- » Multi-Family
- » Senior Living
- » Small-Scale, Local Retail
- » Work-Live Developments

Figure 4.9 Mixed-Residential district parcels

URBAN EDGE

Designed to accommodate the demand for local businesses, the Urban Edge district is located along major and minor arterials within Niles. New construction within the districts is intended to feature minimal setbacks from the street with parking located at the rear. Altogether, these corridors are intended to complement downtown at a smaller scale through walkability and mixed-use development.

Commercial uses should be built at a small to medium scale and located within a walkable distance to residential districts. Any residential construction within the Urban Edge district should be of a higher density than single-family detached which includes townhomes, quadplexes, and small apartments. Mixed-use development in the form of apartments over retail is preferred.

Traffic calming and streetscaping features such as high-visibility crosswalks, bump-outs, street trees, and bike lanes should be implemented along these corridors.

DISTRICT SUMMARY

- » Walkable, mixed use environment at a smaller scale than Downtown Niles
- » Primarily located on arterial streets with traffic calming treatment



DENSITY

5-10 units/AC
20k-50k sq ft/AC



MAX HEIGHT

45 ft



FRONT SETBACK

0-30 ft



MAX LOT COVERAGE

80%



PARKING

- » Located at the rear or sides of buildings
- » Shared-access encouraged
- » Required parking should be minimal to encourage walkability



PERMITTED USES

- » Small-scale offices
- » Small-Medium scale, local retail and restaurants
- » Multi-Family Residential
- » Single-family attached

Figure 4.10 Urban Edge district parcels

COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

Primarily located along U.S. 422, the commercial land use district contains existing commercial development aimed towards serving the wider region. This district is intended to accommodate medium to large scale commercial uses such as big-box stores and fast food establishments with drive-thrus. Additional permitted uses include medical offices and hotels alongside multi-family residential. As such, existing buildings feature larger setbacks and front-located parking with less emphasis on the pedestrian and more on the vehicle. Parking for new development is encouraged to be located at the sides or rear of buildings, though if unfeasible, front-located parking will be required to include landscaping or screening from the street.

While the existing state of the district is unfriendly to pedestrians, sidewalks and safe crosswalks at intersections should be implemented.

DISTRICT SUMMARY

- » Vehicle-oriented commercial development
- » Parking with screening or green infrastructure



DENSITY

10k-100k sq ft/AC



MAX HEIGHT

60 ft



FRONT SETBACK

10-100 ft



MAX LOT COVERAGE

50%



PARKING

- » Located to the side of rear of building when possible
- » Shared-access encouraged
- » Properly scaled surface parking with islands and green infrastructure integrated
- » Frontage or access drive is encouraged to reduce frequency of curb cuts



PERMITTED USES

- » Office
- » Retail
- » Restaurants
- » Medical offices and hospitals
- » Hotel and lodging
- » Multi-Family Residential

Figure 4.11 Commercial Corridor district parcels

EMPLOYMENT-CENTER

Designed to accommodate large job sources for local and regional workers, the employment center district is characterized by both office parks and industrial uses. As such, accessibility considerations should be both local and regional, the former through enhanced sidewalk and trail connectivity and availability and the latter through traffic considerations.

Workforce housing is permitted and highly encouraged, as a result of a concerns heard from local employers with regards to reliable transportation to work.

Similar to the commercial district, parking is encouraged to be located at the rear or sides of the building, but if unfeasible should include green infrastructure or screening from surrounding streets.

DISTRICT SUMMARY

- » Office and industrial campuses which attract local and regional workers
- » Workforce housing providing employers with a pool of candidates within close proximity



DENSITY

10k-100k sq ft/AC



MAX HEIGHT

10-100 ft



SETBACKS

10-100 ft



MAX LOT COVERAGE

50%



PARKING

- » Located to the side of rear of building when possible
- » Properly scaled surface parking with islands and green infrastructure integrated
- » Screened loading docks and bays



PERMITTED USES

- » Manufacturing
- » Office
- » Industrial
- » Research & Development
- » Workforce housing

Figure 4.12 Employment Center district parcels

INSTITUTIONAL

Public-serving uses, including schools, municipal offices, and churches are located in the the Institutional District. These locations serve important civic purposes and many could be considered anchors of the community.

As such, they should be well-connected to nearby uses by all modes of transportation. Surface parking in the district should be encouraged to be located at the rear or sides of buildings and when not, include green infrastructure or screening.

Public green space and amenities should be incorporated throughout, and city-owned sites should feature Niles branding.

DISTRICT SUMMARY

- » Strong accessibility and connectivity
- » Landscaping and green space integrated throughout civic and institutional campuses



DENSITY
N/A



MAX HEIGHT
None



SETBACKS
10-100 ft

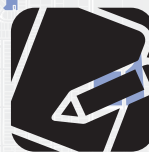


MAX LOT COVERAGE
50%



PARKING

- » Located at the rear or sides of buildings
- » Green islands and infrastructure



PERMITTED USES

- » Educational Uses
- » City Offices
- » Religious Uses
- » Parks

Figure 4.13 Institutional district parcels

PARKLAND

Parkland district includes recreation and natural areas within Niles including sports fields, wooded areas, trails and paths, playgrounds, or other park facilities. Connectivity between parks and other land uses, especially neighborhoods, local businesses, and schools, should be given high consideration through trail planning and sidewalk construction.

Amenities within parks should be tailored towards a wide range of ages and abilities with specialty parks such as dog parks, splash pads, or community gardens serving as amenities to nearby residential neighborhoods.

While the Parkland District contains the areas designated as parks, parks are not limited to the district and are considered permitted uses in all other districts.

DISTRICT SUMMARY

- » Balance of active and passive uses
- » Should accompany residential and commercial growth



DENSITY

N/A



MAX HEIGHT

N/A



SETBACKS

N/A



MAX LOT COVERAGE

N/A



PARKING

- » Surface parking
- » Conveniently located and scaled for use



PERMITTED USES

- » Parks, Nature Centers, Public access points
- » Trails
- » Sports Fields
- » Cemetery

Figure 4.14 Parkland district parcels

Priority Development Areas

Three specific areas were identified by the steering committee as potential sites for redevelopment. The Niles Comprehensive Plan proposes specific uses for each site and includes conceptual site plans. Input received from steering committee meetings, public officials, the community survey, and community events influenced the proposed uses.

The three sites selected for conceptual site plans are all publicly owned (except for parcel 25-003089) and are proposed to be redeveloped as:

- » a downtown entertainment district located at the Main St and State St corner in Downtown Niles on parcels 25-720970 and 25-491500,
- » a workforce housing development including upgrades to Murphy Park located on parcels 25-003025, 25-003026, 25-003027, 25-003028, 25-003029, 25-003032, 25-003089, 25-122936, 25-900113, 25-900816, 25-900994,
- » a senior/workforce housing development located adjacent to the Von Isley Estate on South Main St on parcel 25-900944.

Additionally, because downtown revitalization is a key component of the plan, a Small Area Plan was developed for Downtown Niles, which includes streetscaping, placemaking, and infill development recommendations. These recommendations were also influenced by the community's vision for a more pedestrian-oriented district with a mix of uses.



Figure 4.15 State and Main Street intersection in downtown Niles



Figure 4.16 Vacant industrial site adjacent to Murphy Park



Figure 4.17 Vacant parcel on S Main St

Downtown Niles Small Area Plan

Strong communities are anchored by strong downtowns and the residents who support them. Downtown Niles, as it exists now, is dominated by surface parking and vacant storefronts, both of which present an opportunity for mixed-use infill and enhanced streetscapes. The Downtown Niles Small Area Plan calls for converting Harry Stevens Alley into a pedestrian plaza and thoroughfare, along which street trees, seating, and ambient lighting complement storefronts, ultimately creating a vibrant atmosphere attractive to local and regional visitors. Based on feedback from the Steering Committee and Strawberry Festival attendees, a proportion of existing surface parking would be replaced with

more productive development in the form of 1-3 story mixed-use buildings. Façade design is recommended to blend in with or complement the surrounding traditional architectural styles, shielding the remaining preserved surface parking from the public view. Parking along Main Street would be converted to a slanted format, and safety concerns would be addressed with the addition of high-visibility crosswalks and bump outs. Mosquito Creek, located just east of downtown, would be connected to the pedestrian alley and plaza via a high-visibility, decorated, extra-wide crosswalk leading to a new scenic overlook.

SITE SPECIFICS

~1000 Linear ft

New street or pedestrian alley-facing building frontage

~80 Spaces

Surface parking removed

~60 Spaces

Street parking added

~23,000 sq ft

Public green space added (PDA 1)

10 Crosswalks

6 Midblock, 4 Intersection

~35k sq ft

Pedestrian plaza/alley

100k sq ft

New Development



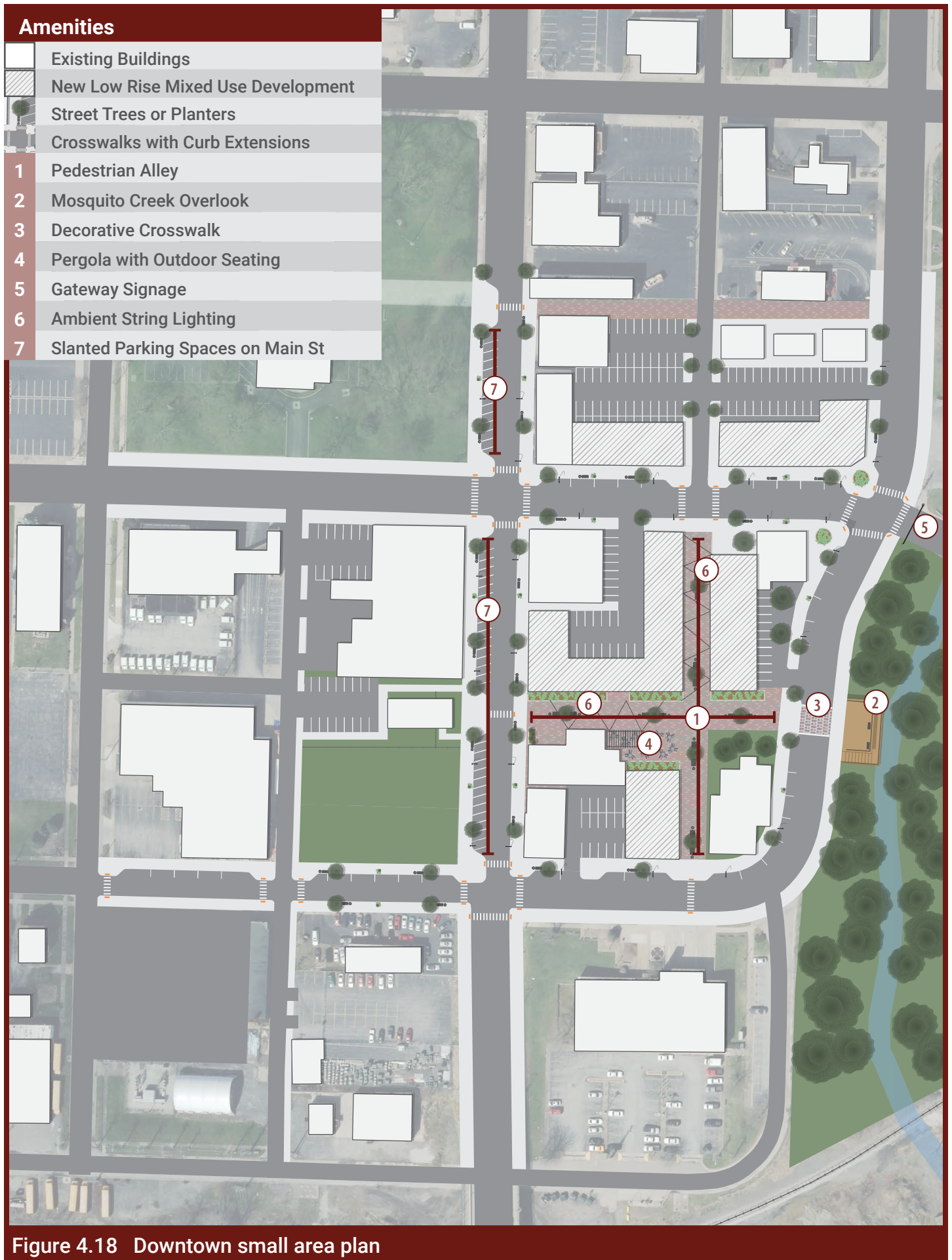


Figure 4.18 Downtown small area plan

Niles Downtown Entertainment District

The Downtown Entertainment District site occupies adjoining lots at 42-58 South Main Street, an optimal site selected to make a vibrant first impression and welcome visitors and residents to Niles. The existing buildings, slated for removal, will make way for a substantial public plaza and green space. Its aim is to serve as a flexible and multifunctional space for a variety of enriching and entertaining program opportunities. Niles residents and stakeholders have been engaged in steering committee meetings and the McKinley Library’s Strawberry Festival to understand the highest priorities and favored design elements. The result – a plaza which will include generous flexible hardscape and lawn space to support passive uses such as lunch or coffee, play, a stroll, or small gatherings, as well

as set the stage and provide infrastructure for organized event use such as concerts, markets, art walks, wellness programming, and group meetups. The plaza is surrounded by planting with opportunities to incorporate themed or sponsored gardens, sculptural or pop up art, provide pollinator habitat and treat storm water. The existing historic Robins Theater will have legacy architectural elements salvaged and interpretive signage incorporated to preserve an important piece of Niles past. Finally, the site will be surrounded by an updated, amenity rich streetscape which will provide furnishings and added safety to cyclists and pedestrians, and provide food truck opportunities to support event programming.

SITE SPECIFICS

~23k sq ft
Downtown Public Space



Figure 4.19 Downtown Entertainment District conceptual rendering

Features & Amenities

- 1 Cornice-Column Reuse
- 2 Food Truck Friendly Parking
- 3 Curb Extension
- 4 Tree Grove
- 5 Curving Seat Wall
- 6 "NILES" Large Letter Sign
- 7 Seating with Overhead Canopies
- 8 Art Wall
- 9 Performance Stage
- 10 Flex Lawn
- 11 Sculpture Garden



Figure 4.20 Downtown park conceptual site plan

Langley St Industrial Housing

Through stakeholder engagement with local industries, a need for workforce housing and associated services was identified. Industry leaders put forth the idea of building such housing with integrated services east of downtown Niles and north of the Mahoning River, where the majority of manufacturing businesses currently reside. Potential sites were analyzed for their access to employment, ownership, proximity to community amenities, and feasibility through constraints mapping.

The site chosen for development is primarily publicly owned land along Mosquito Creek, free of floodplain constraints and heavily wooded. It is situated directly between downtown Niles and several industrial properties, with multimodal access to both areas via Park Avenue and the Niles Greenway.

In terms of development strategy, a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) involving the city, a private (ideally local) developer, local industry leaders, and a workforce, community, public health, or economic development organization is

recommended. Incentives for the developer and funding mechanisms accessible through both government and non-profit entities should be considered to form a diversified capital stack. The industry leaders and non-profit organization(s) should collaborate on programmatic offerings for residents focused on upskilling the labor force, teaching life skills, and providing childcare.

Physically, the development site should maintain as much wooded area and access to nature as possible, so as to not meaningfully disturb the creek's riparian buffer. An existing towing business on the site would require negotiations for acquisition and removal, and the parcel would also need rezoned from Industrial to Residential. Parcels owned by the city's parks department to the southwest and southeast of the site should be included for improvements in the development plans, as they would provide additional amenities for residents, increasing their quality of life. Lastly, connections to downtown, the Niles Greenway, and the associated employment centers should be strengthened and enhanced to ensure equitable access.

SITE SPECIFICS

R-C Residential
Proposed Re-Zoning
Currently I-Industrial

8 Townhomes
2200 sq ft each
Rear Yards and 2 Car Garages

40 Apartments
3 Story Walkup
2 buildings: 20k sq ft each

4-acres
Total Site Area





Features & Amenities

- | | |
|----|----------------------------|
| 1 | 3 Story Walk-Up Apartments |
| 2 | Townhomes |
| 3 | Amenities Building |
| 4 | Playground |
| 5 | Athletic Field |
| 6 | Community Garden |
| 7 | Retention Pond |
| 8 | Outdoor Community Area |
| 9 | Shelter Area |
| 10 | Picnic Area |
| 11 | Bike Storage |
| 12 | Niles Greenway |



Figure 4.21 Langley St Industrial Housing conceptual site plan

South Main Street Housing

Located on a vacant 2.1-acre parcel 0.3 miles south of downtown Niles, the South Main Street PDA provides an exciting opportunity for residential infill and community space. The parcel is currently zoned B2 - Neighborhood Commercial, which permits Group Residential Developments. The proposed PDA complies with all regulations including height, setback, and parking requirements. The Niles Steering Committee identified residential and hospitality as potential land uses for the site, the former of which was selected. The development is designed to be multigenerational, providing quadplex apartments to meet the needs of growing elderly and workforce populations, and 2-story beginner

townhomes to address the shortage of owner-occupied housing within Niles. Establishing a sense of community was another priority of the steering committee, which the proposed development accommodates with gathering spaces in the form of a tree-lined plaza and picnic area. A multi-use path will run along the site's treeline and connect to an existing path located at Niles Middle School. Students of the middle school are encouraged to get involved with the proposed PDA through the creation of a student-designed community space located either on the site or directly adjacent to the south on school-owned land.

SITE SPECIFICS

8 Townhomes

2,200-2,800 sq ft each
Rear Yards and Covered Parking with Solar Panels

12 Apartments

Senior or Workforce Housing
3 quadplexes: 1k sq ft units

2.1 acres
Total Site Area



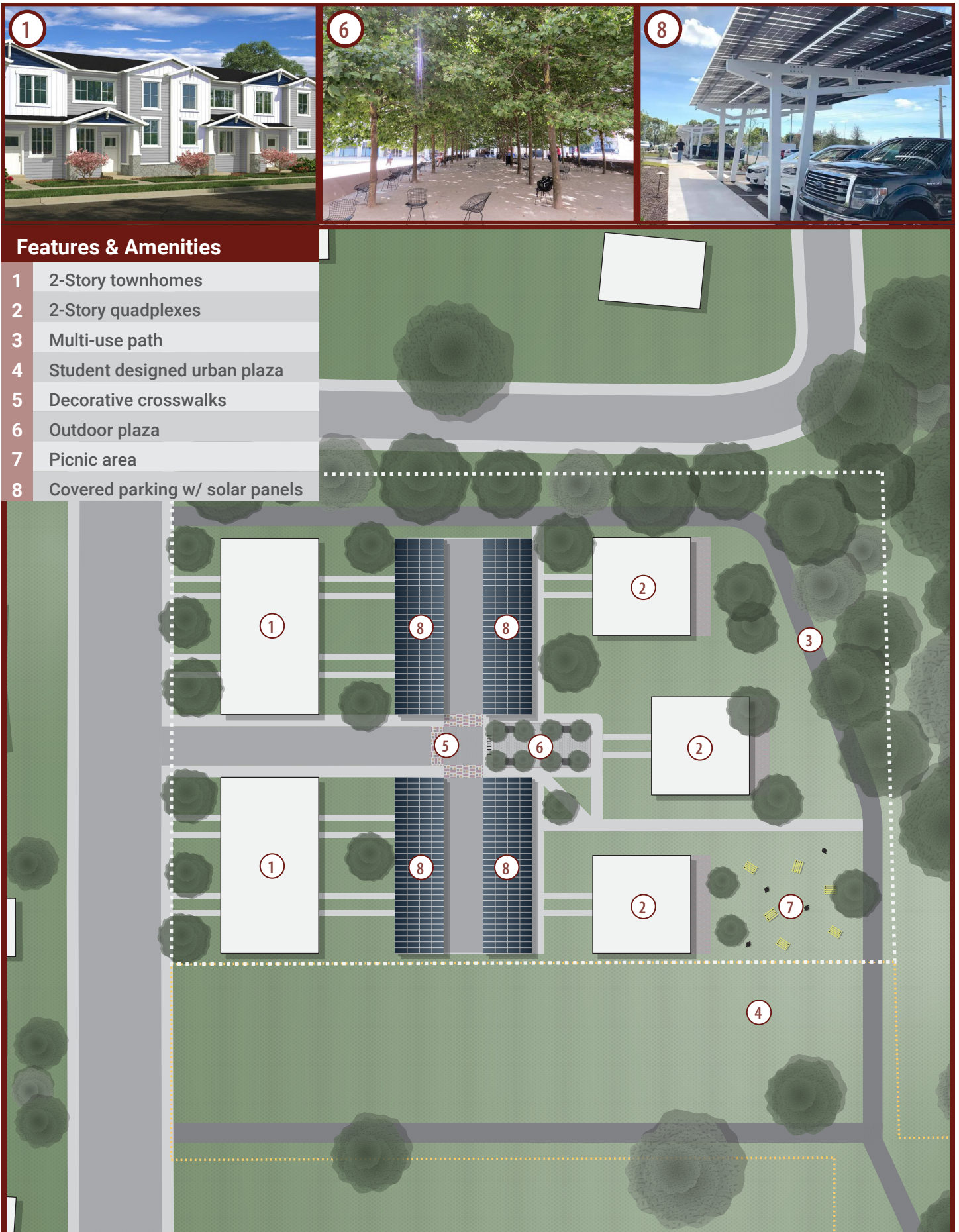


Figure 4.22 South Main Street Housing conceptual site plan

V. IMPLEMENTATION

- » Downtown Revitalization
- » Parks and Recreation
- » Economic Development
- » Housing
- » Transportation
- » Land Use



Overview

This chapter describes the Niles Comprehensive Plan's recommended strategies, which were developed based on feedback heard from the community. Strategies are grouped into six different topics, and further categorized into different goals which are shown in Figure 5.1.

The following pages in the chapter are divided by topic. Each topic begins with a summary page with a description of the existing conditions within the city and the community input which helped develop the plan's recommendations, which are found in a table at the end of the topic's section. The pages in between the topic summary and table describe each goal, and give more detail about some of the recommended strategies. Various case studies can be found throughout these pages.

The implementation tables at the end of each topic's section contain a full list of recommended strategies and contain the following columns:

- » Goal
- » Strategy
- » Timeline: Estimated time required for implementation
- » Responsible Parties: Potential parties which could be involved in the strategy's implementation
- » Funding: Possible sources of funding for each strategy



DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

- » Reactivate Underutilized Storefronts
- » Incentivize Attractive Uses
- » Create Public Space Complementary to Retail



PARKS AND RECREATION

- » Create a Blue-Way Along Mosquito Creek
- » Upgrade existing park facilities
- » Utilize the Mahoning River as an Economic and Cultural Asset



HOUSING

- » Improve Housing Quality and Access for All
- » Promote Walkable, Mixed-Use Neighborhoods
- » Increase Resident Access to Healthy Foods



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- » Retain and Support Growth of Industrial Areas
- » Encourage Commercial Development Across the City



TRANSPORTATION

- » Achieve a Sustainable and Efficient Multi-Modal Transportation Network
- » Ensure the Safety of Non-Motorists Along U.S. 422



LAND USE

- » Codify Desired Future Development Patterns

Figure 5.1 Topics of the Niles Comprehensive Plan with goals in bullet points

Downtown Revitalization

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Implementing a successful downtown revitalization strategy requires careful planning, coordination, and community involvement. The City of Niles downtown is home to the William McKinley Birthplace Museum and McKinley Memorial Library, both significant points of interest in the region. Downtown is also home to municipal offices, banks, a coffee shop (Figure 5.2), law offices, a restaurant and various offices. Multiple downtown businesses sit vacant, foot traffic is rare, and people don't visit enough (Figure 5.3).

Downtown Main Street, also known as State Route 46, is a highly utilized truck route. The truck traffic is noisy and can pose as a danger to pedestrians.

An empty downtown projects a negative image of the community and can deter private investment. Therefore, strategically identify the types of businesses the City wants downtown and incentivize businesses to reside in downtown, will help attract visitors.

COMMUNITY INPUT

Community members expressed a strong preference for a vibrant downtown area characterized by a range of amenities, including parks, food trucks, concerts, farmers/art markets, and outdoor seating. They favored buildings primarily being two stories or taller with diverse uses, or a balanced mix of one-story buildings with single uses and taller structures with varied purposes. Housing development should feature apartments above retail spaces, promoting mixed-use spaces. The community values a diverse array of shops, restaurants, and outdoor dining options to enrich the downtown experience and expressed specific interest in developing Mosquito Creek Overlook (Figure 5.4). These preferences collectively emphasize a dynamic and mixed-use downtown environment while preserving green spaces and accommodating parking needs.



Figure 5.2 Cadence Coffee, a thriving small business in downtown



Figure 5.3 Retail vacancy in Downtown Niles



Figure 5.4 Example of overlook and proposed location along Mosquito Creek

Downtown Revitalization

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT CORPORATIONS (CIC)

Overview

CICs are a type of nonprofit or quasi-governmental organization established at the municipal level with the primary purpose of promoting economic development, community revitalization, and overall improvement within the city.

Many of the downtown revitalization programs and projects found on the following pages can be implemented easier with the help of the CIC. The following paragraphs describe the possible roles of the CIC, and are summarized in Figure 5.5.

Economic Development

Programs and strategies focused on fostering economic growth and development, to attract new businesses, retain existing ones, create job opportunities, and encourage investments in the community are assisted by the CIC (Figures 5.6-5.7).

Public-Private Partnerships

Collaboration with local government entities, business leaders, community organizations, and residents help implement community improvement initiatives.

Real Estate Development

CICs can acquire and rehabilitate vacant or blighted properties to make them more appealing for businesses and investors.

Tax Incentives and Financing

CICs have the authority to offer tax incentives, grants, and low-interest loans.

Non-Profit Status

Revenue from various sources, including property rentals, grants, service fees, and public private partnerships can be generated by the CIC.

Funding and Grants

CICs have the authority to seek funding from various sources, such as grants from state and federal agencies and private sector investments.

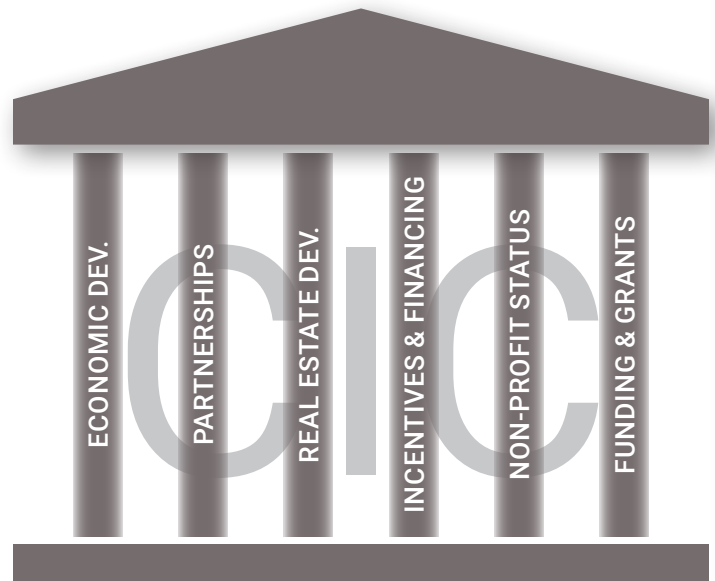


Figure 5.5 Possible roles of a CIC



Figure 5.6 Cadence Coffeehouse and Creperie utilized CIC funding

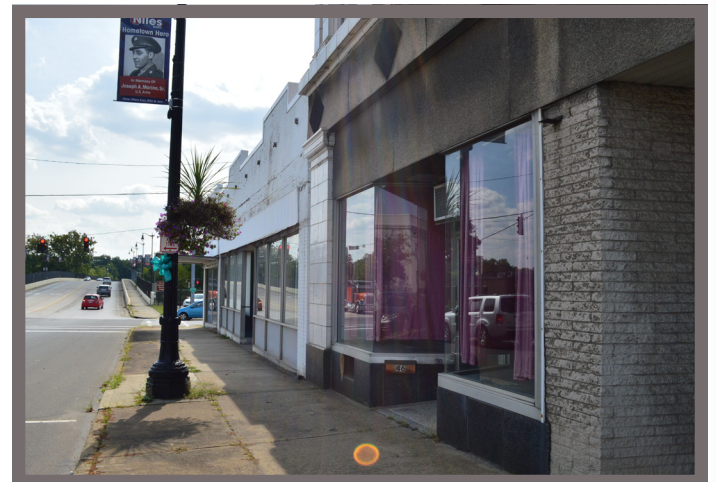


Figure 5.7 Storefronts acquired by the CIC to be demolished and redeveloped

Downtown Revitalization

RE-ACTIVATE UNDERUTILIZED STOREFRONTS

Niles residents want things to do in their downtown, which is presently occupied by vacant storefronts, parking lots, and spaces used for offices. Encouraging infill development on parking lots and implementing programs to attract retailers to storefronts are both methods to help revitalize Downtown Niles. Encouraging housing development can help increase the customer base located within a walkable distance to retailers (Figure 5.8).

Infill Development

When main street blocks are broken up by parking lots, the density of uses decreases, making the district less walkable. Walkable districts are more supportive of retail activity, generate greater tax revenues and higher returns on investment, and promote a greater sense of community¹. There are multiple parking lots along Main Street, E State St SE, and E Park St where infill development could occur. Mixed-use apartments with first floor retail is recommended due to simultaneously accommodating the demands for more housing and retail in downtown (Figure 5.9).

Vacant Office to Residential Conversion

Office vacancy rates have spiked nationwide, a trend forecasted to continue as more companies shift towards remote work. The adaptive reuse of these spaces can help increase the community's housing stock without requiring new construction. Such projects are taking place nationwide, including Downtown Cleveland (Figure 5.10).



Figure 5.8 Downtown Kent, OH is an attractive shopping district.



Figure 5.9 An example of a downtown infill project in Lafayette, LA. (Source: Archinect.com)

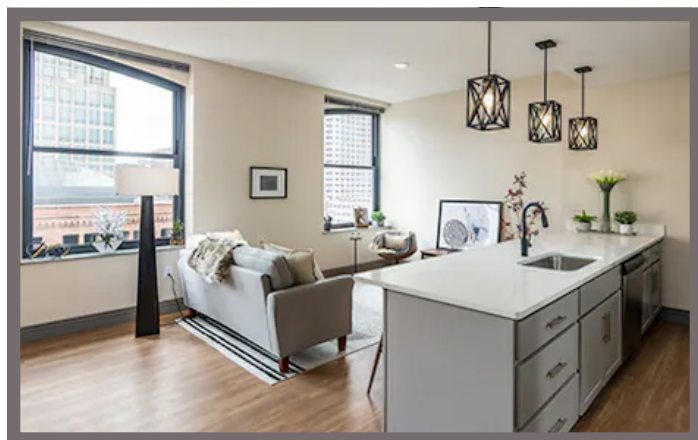


Figure 5.10 A former office converted to residential in Downtown Cleveland. (Source: Cleveland Magazine)

¹ Rachel Quednau, "Why Walkable Streets are More Economically Productive," Strong Towns, January 18, 2018. <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2018/1/16/why-walkable-streets-are-more-economically-productive#:~:text=Walkable%20streets%2C%20on%20the%20other,investment%20than%20auto%2Doriented%20streets.>

Downtown Revitalization

INCENTIVIZE DESIRABLE BUSINESSES TO LOCATE IN DOWNTOWN

Downtown Niles is characterized by a lack of restaurants and retail, which are found in similar districts that draw visitors. Providing occupancy space is a necessary step, policies to encourage businesses to locate in the district and events to draw customers are needed to maximize the district's economic potential.

Public Events

Hosting frequent events such as farmers markets, food truck days, and parades in downtown draw large gatherings of people who otherwise may be unfamiliar with the district. Though smaller vendors may be the attraction of the event, commercial storefronts are made visible to passerby who may stop inside or visit at a later date.

Micro-Leasing

Successfully implemented in the City of Columbiana, the program offers 30-day leases to allow small-businesses to try out downtown storefronts (Figure 5.11). Another such program was utilized in the Over-the-Rhine neighborhoods in Cincinnati (Figure 5.12).



Figure 5.11 Thriving Main Street businesses in Columbiana, resulting from the city's 30-day micro-lease program



Figure 5.12 Main Street Pop Up Program, Over-the-Rhine Cincinnati

(Source: Spectrum News 1)

In an effort to get empty store fronts filled on Main Street, 3CDC (Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation) offered 90 day leases for small businesses to try out brick-and-mortar store. The program makes it easier for small businesses to try something new with less risk.

Downtown Revitalization

CREATE PUBLIC SPACE COMPLEMENTARY TO RETAIL

Increasing the walkability and availability of public space in Downtown Niles can boost the economic performance of retailers. A 2015 Urban Land study found that walkable neighborhoods displayed higher retail sales (80%) than non-walkable neighborhoods¹. Downtown Niles needs to prioritize upgrades to its sidewalks, public spaces, and pedestrian safety in order to create a walkable district which maximizes the success of local businesses.

Walkable and Safe Streetscapes

Elements such as benches, street trees, and trash cans can make the district more pedestrian-friendly (Figure 5.13). Restriping existing crosswalks and adding midblock crossings are methods to improve circulation within the district. Incorporating a road diet not only can help slow traffic but also provide space for additional parking.

Way-Finding Signage

Wayfinding signage helps people navigate to points of interest throughout the district. A lack of a wayfinding signage can also lead to a perceived parking shortage, as main streets rarely have insufficient parking, rather insufficient information to find parking². The implementation of a consistent branding scheme to signage can help give the district a unique sense of place (Figure 5.14).

Downtown Park Space

Downtown parks give visitors something to do besides visit commercial establishments (Figure 5.15). The presence of seating, green space, and public art, allows for relaxation, photography, meeting, vending, and hosting events, activities which are less viable in traditional strip malls. Niles should pursue the conceptual design for a park at the corner of Main St and State St found in the previous chapter.

¹ Mariela Alfonzo, "Making the Economic Case for More Walkability," *Urban Land*, May 8, 2015. <https://urbanland.uli.org/public/houston-economic-case-walkability/>

² Wisconsin Economic Development, "Issues and solutions for parking on Main Street," Wisconsin Economic Development. <https://wedc.org/blog/issues-and-solutions-for-parking-on-main-street/>

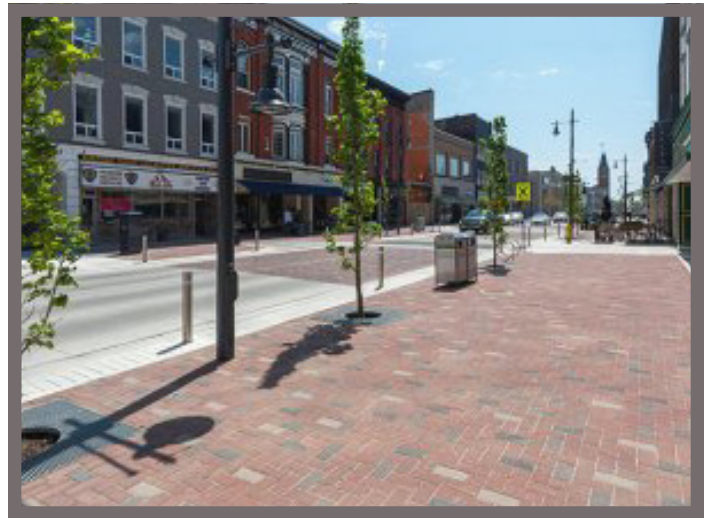


Figure 5.13 Pedestrian oriented streetscape in Bellville, OH



Figure 5.14 Way-finding signage helps people navigate Downtown Bay City, MI.

(Source: Corbin Design)



Figure 5.15 A pocket park in Carlsle, PA.

(Source: The Sentinel)

Downtown Revitalization

PEDESTRIAN ALLEYS

Pedestrian-only streets have become a popular method to increase walkability and provide public space in downtown districts. Intimate spaces for seating, dining, and walking without the hustle and bustle of vehicular traffic appeal to customers with retailers thriving accordingly. Prohibiting vehicular traffic in alleyways opens up space for uses such as food trucks, public art, and events. In its present state, the concrete surface of the alley is cracked and uneven in spots which could present accessibility issues for individuals with a disability. The use of permeable pavers when resurfacing the alley could provide storm water management alongside those associated with mobility. Pedestrian-only street conversions can be permanent as shown in Figure 5.16, or seasonal (Figure 5.17).

Higher volumes of foot traffic make the alley an attractive location for retailers, which could locate in new development lining the alley upon existing parking. Street furniture including benches, trash cans, street trees, and outdoor dining areas create attractive spaces for customers, and the presence of bollards permits freight access for loading and unloading. The parking lots between Main Street and E State St SE can all be accessed without the use of Harry Stevens Alley, making it an ideal candidate for such a project. Recently, a shelter was built along Pine Alley in downtown upon previously existing parking, revealing a demand for more amenities even at the expense of parking (Figure 5.18).



Figure 5.16 Phelps Street Gateway - Youngstown, OH

Completed in 2020, the pedestrian-only alley was transformed from a narrow street filled with retail vacancy to being populated by bars, wineries, and a wide variety of restaurants. The alley has rapidly become the anchor for activity in downtown Youngstown.

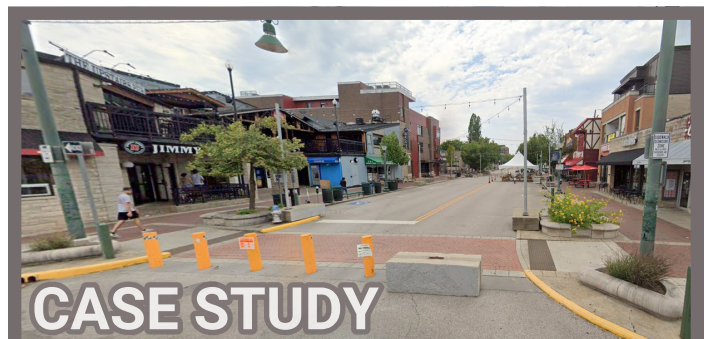


Figure 5.17 Kirkwood Ave – Bloomington, IN

A seasonal and temporary option for pedestrian-only streets can be found on Bloomington Indiana's Kirkwood Ave, which starting in 2020 was closed to vehicles from April to October. During these months, bollards are positioned to block vehicles and temporary furniture is placed for outdoor dining.



Figure 5.18 Existing public seating in downtown Niles, directly north of Harry Stevens Alley

Downtown Revitalization

Table 5.1 Downtown Revitalization Implementation Matrix

Goal	Strategy	Priority	Timeline	Resp. Parties
Re-Activate Underutilized Storefronts	Develop a process to continue updating the Niles Downtown Business and Occupancy inventory.	Medium	0-1 yr	City of Niles, YSU, Land Bank
	Acquire vacant and blighted property for rehabilitation or demolition.	Medium	Ongoing	City of Niles, Land Bank, CIC
	Continue financing the Niles Community Improvement Corporation Programs.	Medium	Ongoing	City of Niles, CIC
	Encourage small-scale, infill, adaptive reuse, historic restoration, and mixed-use redevelopment through incentives, education, and other forms of resources and assistance.	High	Ongoing	City of Niles, CIC
	Convert a portion of existing surface parking with more productive development in the form of 1 - 3 story mixed-use buildings.	Medium	Ongoing	Private property owners, City of Niles, Land Bank, CIC
	Inventory all small businesses within the city	High	0-1 yr	City of Niles
	Convert empty office space into apartments.	Low	1-3 yr	Private property owners, City of Niles, Land Bank
Incentivize Appealing Uses	Attract small commercial businesses downtown.	High	Ongoing	City of Niles, CIC
	Create and promote public events to encourage residents to visit downtown.	High	Ongoing	City of Niles, local groups and organizations
	Start a micro-leasing program for downtown retail spaces	Medium	0-1 yr	City of Niles, CIC
	Encourage and advertise residents to shop locally	Medium	Ongoing	City of Niles, local businesses, CIC
Create Public Space Complementary to Retail	Convert Harry Stevens Alley into a pedestrian plaza.	Medium	3-5 yr	City of Niles, CIC
	Identify street-scape enhancements for Main Street.	High	0-1 yr	City of Niles
	Use way-finding to direct people to downtown amenities.	Medium	1-2 yr	City of Niles
	Create a downtown public space on the corner of State & Main.	Medium	3-5 yr	City of Niles
	Implement a public art program to encourage art installations in downtown Niles (murals, statues, sculptures, etc)	Low	0-1 yr	City of Niles, CIC, Fine Arts Council
	Engage with Niles McKinley High School students to help with downtown planning projects	Medium	Ongoing	City of Niles, CIC, McKinley High School

FUNDING SOURCES

The following sources of funding can be used to aid implementation of the Niles Comprehensive Plan's Transportation strategies:

- » ODOT Transformative Mixed-Use Development Program
- » Niles CBDG

Parks and Recreation

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The City of Niles manages seven parks of different sizes and amenities, with the largest being Waddell Park, home to the Niles Wellness and Recreational Center (Figure 5.19). Notably, there are no parks located on the Mahoning Riverfront in Niles, though Hertz Park and Kennedy Park are along Mosquito Creek. The city owns a river-adjacent property suitable for a riverfront park and canoe/kayak launch.

Niles secured a \$2.5 million U.S. Senate earmark to enhance Waddell Park, including adding a splash pad, restrooms, a playground, a gazebo, and improvements to the baseball field, with completion expected in 2024.

The Niles Greenway Trail, which begins in Downtown Niles, connects with the Mill Creek Bikeway and nearby communities. At the trailhead in Downtown Niles, amenities such as a pavilion, restrooms, and parking are available for trail users (Figure 5.20).

COMMUNITY INPUT

Community feedback in Niles highlighted a strong desire for increased access to recreational opportunities. Residents felt their current park and open space needs aren't met, with a focus on enhancing existing parks through updates and maintenance. Feedback also revealed a demand for more recreation along the Mahoning River, more programs and events, and increased connectivity between parks via walking and biking.

Focus groups emphasized the need for walking trails, trail connectivity, and increased winter sports activities. Maintenance of existing facilities and trails was a shared concern. Additionally, the community favored developing one premier park, Waddell Park, instead of updating the numerous smaller parks.



Figure 5.19 Waddell Park, home of the Niles Wellness Center (Source: City of Niles)



Figure 5.20 The Niles Greenway Trailhead (Source: City of Niles)

Parks and Recreation

GOAL: CREATE A BLUE-WAY ALONG MOSQUITO CREEK

Mosquito Creek, which links Mosquito Lake to the Mahoning River, remains an underutilized waterway. With a substantial stretch flowing through Niles, there exists a potential collaboration with neighboring townships to establish a regional blueway trail (Figure 5.21). Howland Township in particular has expressed interest but lacks creek access due to its buffer policies.

Alongside its lack of buffer policies, Niles', proximity of development along the creek, including residential and commercial zones and the Niles McKinley High School make it an ideal location for the creation of a Mosquito Creek blueway trail. This regional asset would confer benefits at both the local and regional scale, including environmental preservation, economic growth, and enhanced recreational opportunities.

Wayfinding Signage Implementation

Installing wayfinding signage to guide users to blueway trail sites and access points will promote connectivity and encourage residents and tourists to explore both the riverfront and its nearby commercial districts. The application of unified branding will help maximize the economic benefits of the trail. Figure 5.22 shows an example of such signage.

Regional Collaboration

Collaboration between the various townships and municipalities along the blueway is integral in cleaning and maintaining the creek along with securing the necessary funding for amenities.

Figure 5.21 Blueway Overview



A blueway trail, also known simply as a "blueway," is a water-based recreational trail or route typically designated on a river, lake, or other water body. It is designed to provide opportunities for activities such as kayaking, canoeing, paddleboarding, and other non-motorized watercraft use.

Blueway trails are often marked with signage, access points, amenities, and safety features to enhance the experience for paddlers and outdoor enthusiasts.



Figure 5.22 Blue-way wayfinding signage in Mountain Brook, AL



Figure 5.23 Mosquito Creek in 2023

Parks and Recreation

UPGRADE EXISTING PARK AMENITIES

Parks are gathering spaces, instill civic pride, and contribute to the health and wellness of the community. Prioritizing upgrading and maintaining existing parks ensures that residents can enjoy high quality parks.

Improvements to existing facilities include standard maintenance, upgrades to current equipment, and the installation of new equipment. The efforts to improve city parks should focus on the premier parks. Waddell Park, Kennedy Park and Stevens Park have the potential to better serve residents and become regional destinations.

Waddell Park as a Regional Destination

The development of a premier, regional destination park ranked highly among the community's priorities. In 2018, Waddell Park completed a series of upgrades totaling \$67,500, including a dog park, a walking trail, and upgrades to maintenance and restrooms (Figure 5.24). In 2022, the city announced the Waddell Park Improvements Project, to fund upgrades highlighted by a new gazebo, splash pad, and ADA playground totaling \$2.5 million (Figure 5.25). Going forward, the City of Niles should continue pursuing funding for further enhancements to the park.

Events and Programming

Events and programs hosted by both public and private groups attract people to the parks and helps to build a sense of community. Volunteer clean-up days can help maintain the cleanliness of parks, which was a common issue heard from the community (Figure 5.26).



Figure 5.24 The Waddell Park dog park repurposes a former baseball diamond
(Source: WBKN)



Figure 5.25 The Waddell Park Splash Pad is anticipated to be completed by summer 2024.
(Source: WFMJ)

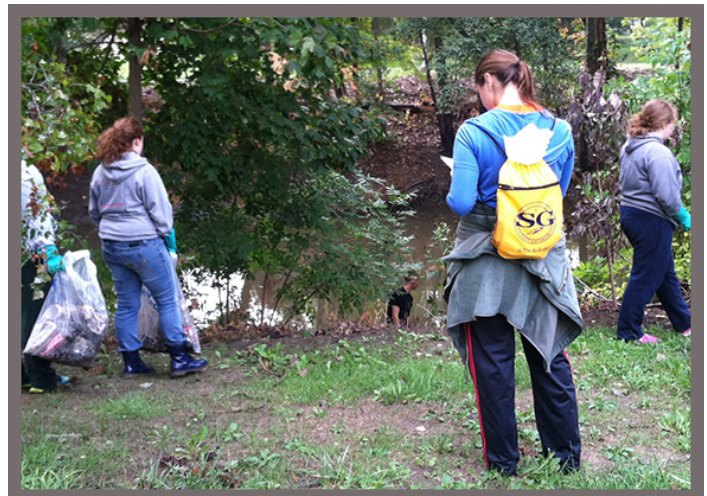


Figure 5.26 A volunteer cleanup in Toledo, OH
(Source: University of Toledo)

Parks and Recreation

UTILIZE THE MAHONING RIVER AS AN ECONOMIC AND RECREATIONAL ASSET

As shown in the Mahoning River Corridor Revitalization Plan, there are actions the city can take to gain the economic, recreational and environmental benefits the river holds. Parks, housing, and mixed-use development along the river can attract tourists, new residents, and retailers to the city. A vibrant riverfront can make Niles one of the best places to live in the Mahoning Valley region.

Kayak Launch Construction

The city-owned parcel, #25-900048, is located on the riverfront and is an ideal location to introduce water recreation. A kayak launch and riverfront park could be constructed to attract visitors to the riverfront and provide easy access to the Mahoning River for activities such as kayaking (Figure 5.27).

Wayfinding Signage Implementation

Wayfinding signage should be implemented along the river. This signage aims to promote connectivity and encourage residents and tourists to explore both the riverfront and the downtown area.

Property Acquisition

Niles should continue to acquire properties for riverfront recreational, residential, and commercial development.



Figure 5.27 Parcel #25-900048, located just south of downtown, is owned by the city and was identified as a potential location for a kayak launch and park.



Figure 5.28 River Front Park – Cuyahoga Falls, OH

The River Front Park in Cuyahoga Falls provides a kayak launch allowing visitors and residents to access the Cuyahoga River Water Trail. Additional amenities include a paved parking lot, restrooms, picnic tables, and an information kiosk. (Source: Cuyahoga River Water Trail)

Parks and Recreation

Table 5.2 Parks and Recreation Implementation Matrix				
Goal	Strategy	Priority	Timeline	Resp. Parties
Create a Blue-Way Along Mosquito Creek	Remove debris along the waterway	High	0-2 yr	City of Niles
	Build kayak launch sites and other access points along the waterway	Medium	2-5 yr	City of Niles
	Communicate permitted uses, and other important information via signage	Low	1-3 yr	City of Niles
	Collaborate with neighboring townships to secure funding and make the creek a regional destination	High	Ongoing	City of Niles
	Identify portions of the waterway that can be utilized for different recreational uses	High	0-1 yr	City of Niles
	Create an overlook along State St.	Low	3-5 yr	City of Niles
	Create a wayfinding and branding strategy	Medium	2-3 yr	City of Niles
	Create a river-walk at Kennedy Park	Low	3-5 yr	City of Niles
Upgrade Existing Parks	Continue upgrades to Waddell Park to create a regional destination including the implementation of the Waddell Park Grant	High	Ongoing	City of Niles
	Improve the quality of restrooms at parks	Low	Ongoing	City of Niles
	Increase recreational programs for all ages (sports, art/crafts, nature)	High	Ongoing	City of Niles, local groups & organizations
	Increase availability of trash and recycling	Low	Ongoing	City of Niles
	Organize more volunteering events for park cleanup	Medium	0-1 yr	City of Niles
	Reach out to community groups within the city to increase awareness of meeting spaces at parks to be used for meetings, gatherings, and events	Low	0-1 yr	City of Niles
	Secure dedicated funding sources for park renovations	Medium	Ongoing	City of Niles
Utilize the Mahoning River as an Economic & Cultural Asset	Conduct a feasibility study for paths along both the Mahoning River and Mosquito Creek	High	0-1 yr	City of Niles
	Acquire property along the Mahoning River for recreational and commercial development.	High	Ongoing	City of Niles, Land Bank
	Construct kayak launch on city owned property located on parcel #25-900048	High	1-3 yr	City of Niles
	Develop riverfront park with amenities at kayak launch location	High	1-3 yr	City of Niles
	Add wayfinding signage from proposed riverfront park property to downtown and from downtown to river.	Low	0-1 yr	City of Niles
	Continue to acquire property along Mahoning River for future recreational and economic development opportunities.	High	Ongoing	City of Niles

The following sources of funding can be used to aid implementation of the Niles Comprehensive Plan's Parks and Recreation strategies:

- » Clean Ohio Trails Fund

Housing

EXISTING CONDITIONS

In Niles, the housing landscape differs from both Trumbull County and the State of Ohio. Niles has a more diverse range of housing types, with only 67.1% of its housing stock consisting of single-family detached structures, which is lower than the other two areas. Instead, Niles has a higher proportion of single-family attached homes, duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes.

While most housing units in Niles are owner-occupied, renting is more common in the city compared to both the county and the state, with 42% of units being occupied by renters.

COMMUNITY INPUT

Community feedback received highlights the significance of housing in respondents' concerns and priorities for Niles. Among the top three topics considered important for the plan, housing was ranked second, with 62% of respondents expressing its importance. Slightly over half of the respondents indicated that their current housing and utility needs were being met, and they expected them to be met in the future. Notably, 21% of respondents mentioned that while their current housing needs were satisfied, they did not expect them to be met in the future, likely due to concerns about rising housing costs and a growing preference for walkable, mixed-use housing options over traditional single-family homes.

The top housing priorities in Niles, as identified by the survey, include constructing more sidewalks and trails, encouraging the development of new housing options, and increasing access to parks and open spaces. These priorities align with the changing preferences for walkable neighborhoods. Additionally, affordability of housing and utilities emerged as common concerns among respondents when discussing other priorities.



Figure 5.29 Senior housing development in Alpharetta, GA.



Figure 5.30 Neighborhood access to park facilities was a community priority, which can be addressed through trail connections and the creation of small gathering spaces.

Housing

IMPROVE HOUSING QUALITY & ACCESS FOR ALL

Neglecting property maintenance can trigger a decline in property values, lead to increased vacancies, and set off a destructive cycle. The stability of housing and neighborhoods plays a pivotal role in retaining current residents and attracting new ones. The city should not only combat blight and ensure the proper maintenance of existing housing stock but also facilitate neighborhood density to accommodate future population growth. According to community feedback, there is a shortage of appealing housing options for various demographics, such as single professionals, the workforce, families, and senior citizens.

Homeowner Incentives

Introducing incentives aimed at encouraging property owners to invest in their properties can help improve the existing housing stock. Existing home-repair programs are available as well, and run by non-profits with which the city could partner with. One such program for owner-occupied homes is the emergency home repair program offered by the Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership. All efforts are made more effective with proper communication with residents to ensure awareness of all programs.

Senior Housing

The population of Niles is comparatively older which comes with certain considerations when planning for future housing needs. Many seniors are unable or prefer not to drive, instead desiring walkable communities with public transit access. Social spaces are a preferred amenity within neighborhoods, which should be more compact and connected with high-quality sidewalks.

Community Reinvestment Areas

The Ohio Community Reinvestment Area program is an economic development tool administered by municipal and county government that provides real property tax exemptions for property owners to renovate existing or construct new buildings¹.

¹ Ohio Department of Development, "Ohio Community Reinvestment Area," Ohio Department of Development, n.d. <https://development.ohio.gov/business/state-incentives/ohio-community-reinvestment-area>

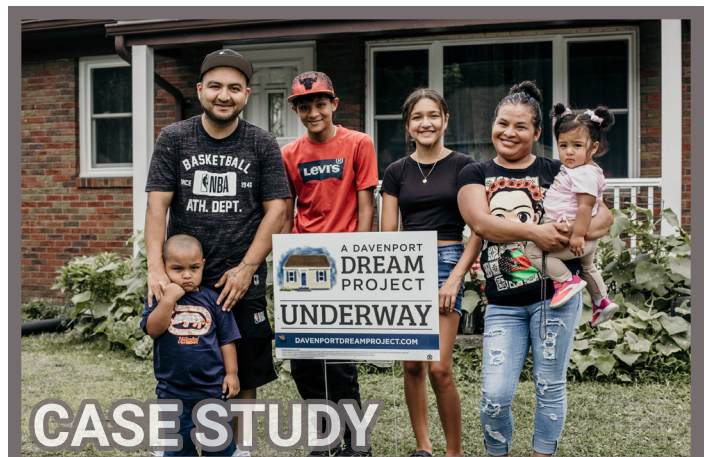


Figure 5.31 DREAM Project - Davenport, IA

The DREAM Project in Davenport, IA provides forgivable grants to homeowners to correct code violations. Owner-occupied homeowners can utilize \$20,000 for facade improvements and can consult a rehabilitation specialist to identify potential improvements.



Figure 5.32 CRA - Columbiana, OH

Over the past 5 years, Columbiana has experienced a housing boom. Before the implementation of the CRA in 2018, there were approximately 14 new homes constructed annually. With the CRA, that number increased to 60-70 homes annually. (Source: WKBN)

The City of Niles currently has a CRA, established in 2006, encompassing the neighborhoods to the east and west of downtown.

Housing

PROMOTE WALKABLE, MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOODS

Walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods are growing in popularity, especially amongst new homebuyers and elderly residents. Living within a walkable distance to destinations such as school, work, and the grocery store promotes an active lifestyle and reduces money spent on fuel. In a survey conducted by the National Association of Realtors, 78% of people responded that they would be willing to pay more to live in an area which allows them to do such.¹ These neighborhoods are also healthy for the planet by reducing automobile usage and carbon emissions. Locating in a walkable community can reduce the necessity of owning multiple cars, and for some may eliminate the need entirely.

Zoning Revisions

Currently, walkability is difficult to establish in the majority of the city due to zoning restrictions. Minimum lot sizes and setback restrictions prevent compact development from occurring, and isolating commercial uses to limited locations in the city prevent residents from accessing them without a vehicle. Figure 5.33 shows the parcels in the city upon which multi-family housing is permitted without the use of a variance or group-residential development permit.

Pedestrian-Friendly Infrastructure

Infrastructure and streetscape elements such as sidewalks, street lights, and a tree canopy help enable pedestrians to move freely and safely through the community. Existing infrastructure must be properly maintained and repaired when needed. Figure 5.34 shows a small, neighborhood scale park, which can act as a community gathering space.

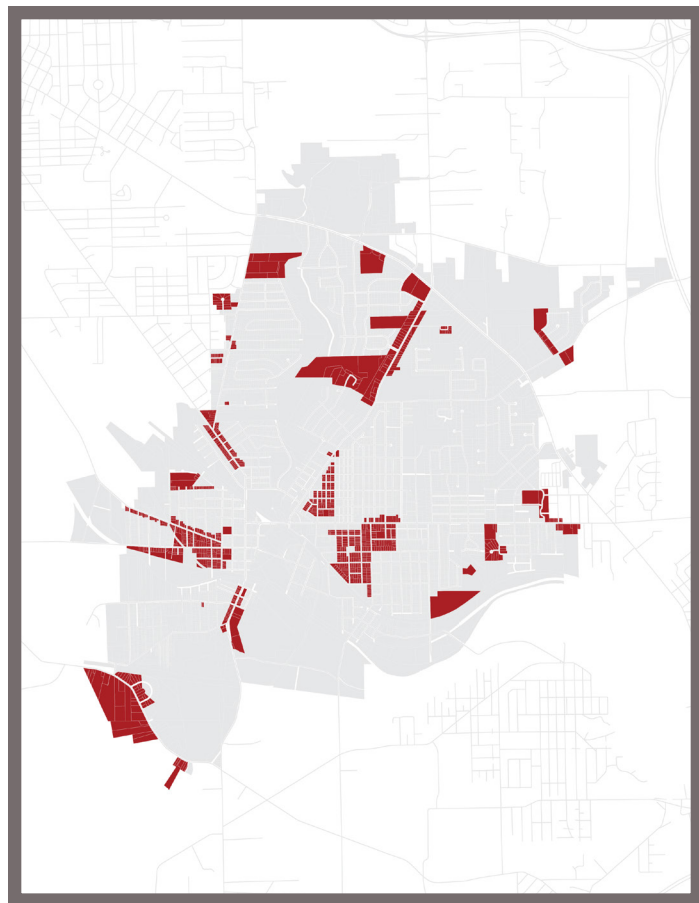


Figure 5.33 Niles parcels where multi-family housing is permitted without a variance or group residential development permit (red)

(Source: City of Niles)



Figure 5.34 Maynard Summit Park in Columbus, OH

¹ National Association of Realtors, "National Smart Growth: Frequencies March 20-April 3, 2023." April 3, 2023. <https://www.nar.realtor/reports/nar-community-and-transportation-preferences-surveys>

Housing

INCREASE RESIDENT ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

Food systems are vital to a community's health, quality of life, and economy. Without an examination of Niles' food system, it is not known where there are gaps within municipal policies, infrastructure, and programming that has led to food insecurity, limited access to nutritious foods, and chronic disease within the community.

Community Food Security Strategy Plan

A thorough examination of Niles' food system includes a community food security survey, audit of food retail locations to identify the availability and affordability of nutritious foods, a spatial analysis of the food system domains, and analysis of physical infrastructure and municipal policy. The document will inform how to improve Niles' food system and leverage resources to make those improvements possible. Partnering with the Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership can help make this study possible. Figure 5.35 details a similar plan in Warren, OH.

Healthy Food Accessibility

Promoting and incentivizing the development of grocery stores within Niles is critical to providing healthy food access for all residents, especially those without a vehicle. The Niles zoning code does not permit the construction of small-scale grocery stores in neighborhoods (Figure 5.36). Legislation can also play a role through the adoption of a dollar store ordinance, which requires a percentage of shelf space at small box discount stores to be dedicated to fresh foods, and prohibits the construction of new small box discount stores to be constructed within 2 miles of an existing one. Dollar stores are competitors with grocery stores, which have a greater variety and often times cheaper healthy foods. By restricting the number of dollar stores, there is more opportunity for grocery stores and other healthy food retail.



Figure 5.35 Warren Community Food Security Strategic Plan– Warren, OH

The Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership conducted a food security survey and analyzed existing conditions to generate actionable recommendations for the city of Warren. Not only can the plan be referenced when applying for funding to improve Warren's food system, it identifies strengths and weaknesses in different domains of the food system.

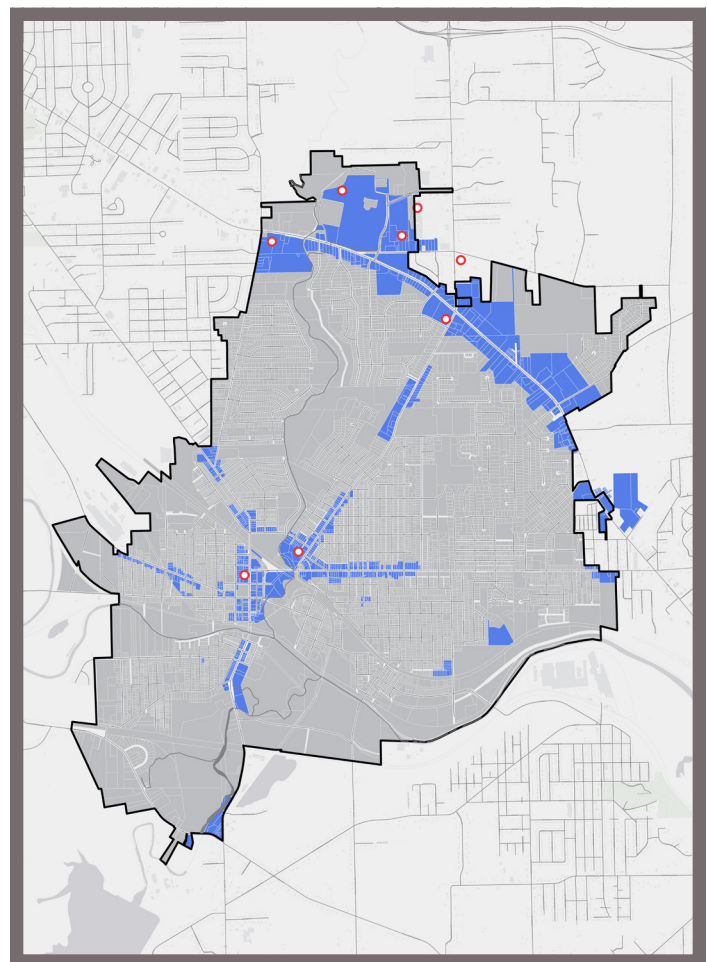


Figure 5.36 Grocery store locations (red) and parcels where grocery stores are permitted by zoning (blue).

Housing

MISSING MIDDLE

The “missing middle” refers to housing typology in-between detached single-family homes and mid-rises that are seldomly present in cities. The missing middle housing includes attached duplexes, fourplexes, townhouses, and courtyard buildings. Typically, missing middle housing holds between 4 and 10 units. Missing middle housing can seamlessly blend into neighborhoods that are surrounded by single family homes while increasing the density (Figure 5.37).

Is There a Demand?

Younger generations are having less children and baby boomers are aging. As a result, households are getting smaller. Smaller households means the amount of space needed to house each household decreases and the demand for housing increases.

Millennials and Gen Zers desire walkable neighborhoods that have more interactions with their community and shorter commutes. Baby Boomers would like homes that require less maintenance while maintaining their independence. Missing middle housing provides an appealing solution for both younger and older generations (Figure 5.38).

Design

One appealing characteristic of missing middle housing is their perceived density is quite low. The architects who design these housing types create compact yet comfortable units into buildings that conform to small-footprints. Missing middle housing is cheap for developers to build as many newly constructed units utilize wood-frame construction. Developers also have the flexibility of either renting or selling the units after construction.



Figure 5.37 Townhomes & ADUs are forms of compact development that can match the style of single family neighborhoods.



Figure 5.38 Madison, WI

Madison's plethora of missing middle housing makes it a desirable place to live. In fact, the city has been named the best place to live in the US multiple times by Livability. Madison experienced a 10 percent population increase from 2010-2018. The missing middle housing combined with the city's safe, walkable streets supports nearly a third of commute trips being taken by a mode other than an automobile.

(Source: American Community Survey)

Housing

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY PREFERENCE DATA

The National Association of Realtors (NAR) conducted a 2023 Community & Transportation Preferences Survey, which indicates that Americans increasingly value homes located near shops, cafes, and parks, and they are willing to pay more for such properties¹. If you have a listing near these amenities, especially within walking distance, it's wise to highlight this in your property marketing.

Around half of the survey respondents prefer living in a walkable community with a shorter commute, even if it means living in an attached home or having a smaller yard. Many respondents prefer a smaller yard over a larger one that is farther from amenities.

The survey uncovered generational differences in preferences, with younger generations showing a stronger preference for walkable communities and proximity to amenities.

The NAR survey assessed various community and transportation traits that influence homebuying decisions. The most valued traits included sidewalks for walking, easy access to community amenities, a short commute to work, access to public transit, and proximity to highways.

Survey respondents believe that the government can play a role in making communities more desirable. They identified priorities for the government, including maintaining and repairing infrastructure, expanding public transportation options, reducing traffic congestion, and making it easier to develop walkable communities. (Figure 5.39).

79%
of survey respondents
consider walkability "very" or
"somewhat" important



78%
of all respondents are
willing to pay more to live in
a walkable community

90%
of Gen Z and Millennials are
willing to pay more to live in
a walkable community

Figure 5.39 Community & Transportation Preferences Survey results

(Source: National Association of Realtors)

¹ National Association of Realtors, "National Smart Growth: Frequencies March 20-April 3, 2023." April 3, 2023. <https://www.nar.realtor/reports/nar-community-and-transportation-preferences-surveys>

Housing

Table 5.3 Housing Implementation Matrix				
Goal	Strategy	Priority	Timeline	Resp. Parties
Improve Housing Quality & Access for All	Utilize existing non-profits and programs to improve existing housing stock	High	Ongoing	Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership
	Improve communication with residents about programs that help with home renovations	High	Ongoing	Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership
	Promote the development of senior friendly housing	Medium	Ongoing	City of Niles
	Revise zoning to allow for multigenerational housing, duplexes and 4-plexes in single-family areas	High	0-1 yr	City of Niles
	Promote down payment assistance programs	Medium	Ongoing	Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership/ Land Bank
	Aggregate vacant resident parcels together for infill development	Medium	1-2 yr	City of Niles, Land Bank
	Expand CRAs to additional areas of the city	Medium	1-3 yr	City of Niles, CIC
Promote Walkable, Mixed-Use Neighborhoods	Allow for mixed-use development to occur in commercial areas and medium density residential nearby commercial areas	High	0-1 yr	City of Niles
	Revise minimum lot size and setback requirements	Medium	0-1 yr	City of Niles
	Implement local demo and sidewalk programs	High	Ongoing	City of Niles
Increase Resident Access to Healthy Food	Create a Niles Community Food Security Strategic Plan	Medium	1-2 yr	Trumbull Neighborhood Partnerships
	Encourage the development of grocery stores and other retail selling fresh foods in food-insecure areas	Low	1-5 yr	City of Niles, CIC
	Create an dollar store dispersal ordinance that prohibits the construction of a new small box discount stores within a set distance of an existing one and requires existing small box discount stores to dedicate at least 10 percent of their shelf space to be dedicated to healthy foods.	High	0-1 yr	City of Niles
	Permit and encourage urban agriculture on vacant lots	Low	0-1 yr	City of Niles, Land Bank

FUNDING SOURCES

The following sources of funding can be used to aid implementation of the Niles Comprehensive Plan's Housing strategies:

- » ODOT Transformative Mixed-Use Development Program
- » Niles CBDG
- » USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Economic Development

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The majority of commercial uses in Niles are clustered along U.S. 422, including the Eastwood Mall, a regional shopping destination. Though some commercial uses are centrally located near neighborhoods, the majority of shopping trips for residents of Niles require a vehicle. While other communities have leveraged their downtown area to attract small businesses, Downtown Niles is characterized by vacant storefronts and an underwhelming amount of retail and restaurants.

The majority of land along the railroads and Mahoning River is zoned for manufacturing or industrial uses, though many sites sit vacant despite possessing adequate infrastructure. Difficulty attracting and maintaining a consistent workforce has impacted existing companies and deterred prospective companies. A lack of reliable transportation, as many workers lack vehicle ownership, is an underlying cause.

COMMUNITY INPUT

Ranking highest among resident priorities was small business growth within Niles. Though Downtown Niles was the most frequently mentioned location, residents supported allowing small businesses such as coffee shops, to be located along arterial streets throughout the city. Support for mixed use development was another common theme throughout the engagement process, which would provide retailers with customers located in a close proximity.

Multiple leaders of manufacturing companies in Niles attended a focus group, in which they expressed support for workforce housing as a means of workforce retention, which was their largest concern (Figure 5.42). Alongside seniors, industrial leaders were the largest advocates for public transit expansion to attract workers who lack vehicular access.



Figure 5.40 Eastwood Mall, a major regional commercial destination.

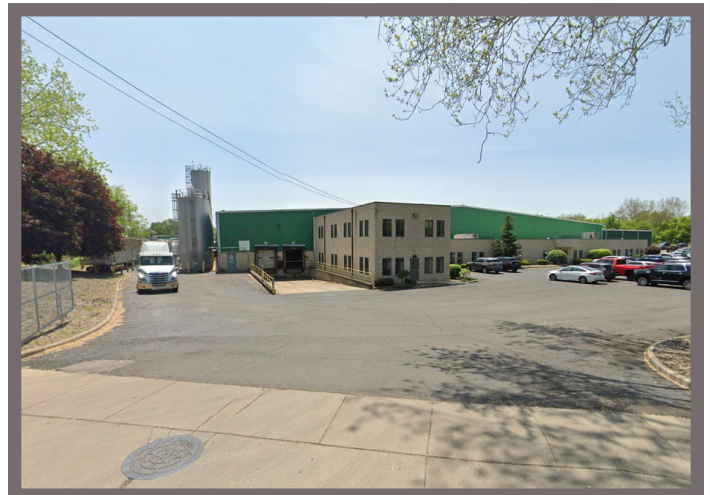


Figure 5.41 Dinesol Plastics, a major manufacturer in Niles.



Figure 5.42 Industrial leaders focus group

Economic Development

RETAIN AND SUPPORT GROWTH OF INDUSTRIAL AREAS

Like many other cities along the Mahoning River, Niles has a rich industrial history (Figure 5.43). Land use in Niles reflects its past, with industrial uses clustered along the Mahoning River and the railroads. While some industry and manufacturing operate in the city, many sites sit vacant despite possessing attractive infrastructure, such as the substation on Belmont Avenue. While some housing exists near industrial areas, particularly on the city's west side, most sites are only conveniently accessible by vehicle.

Workforce Housing

Employers have expressed concerns regarding the ability of workers to access jobs without the use of a vehicle. While public transit expansion and the construction of bike facilities would help alleviate this issue, the construction of workforce housing on or near industrial and manufacturing facilities was popular amongst industrial leaders (Figure 5.44).

Supportive Services

In addition to workforce housing, Niles manufacturers supported the provision of supportive services such as childcare to their employees. The elimination of the aforementioned barriers to employee access would help Niles stand out when attracting new employers.

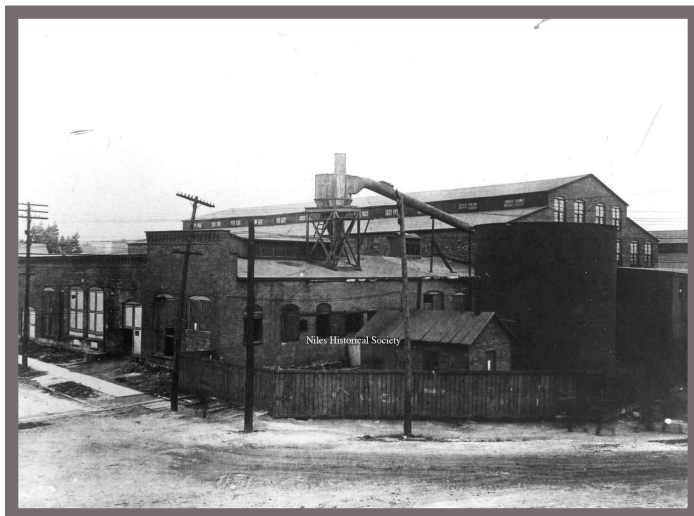


Figure 5.43 Manufacturing companies such as Niles Car & Manufacturing Co. played a major role in the history and growth of Niles.

(Source: Niles Historical Society)



Figure 5.44 Cook Medical – Spencer, IN

The medical supply company located in rural Indiana struggled to find workers who could reliably commute or afford to live in Spencer. Their solution was to construct a 99 home subdivision in 2023 to sell at a discount to its employees. (Sources: NPR, Herald Times)

Economic Development

ENCOURAGE COMMERCIAL GROWTH ACROSS THE CITY

Opportunities exist throughout the city to expand or introduce small-medium scale commercial development. Downtown possesses both underutilized existing storefronts and a parking surplus which could be the site of infill development. Riverfront commercial and mixed-use developments are becoming increasingly attractive and profitable to developers, and the vacant, former industrial parcels along the Mahoning River present as ideal locations (Figure 5.45). Maintaining partnerships with private developers and utilizing incentive programs are highly important in achieving this vision.

City of Niles Marketing Director

Hiring a role to promote the city's events, activities, local businesses, etc through both virtual and physical advertising helps keep people informed, and can attract businesses through the city's increased visibility. To achieve the city's maximum brand recognition and exposure, content creation using multiple channels of media, such as Facebook, Instagram, email, and local and regional newspapers, can help reach all generations. The City of Medina has created a cohesive branding package which is used online, in print, and on signage throughout the city (Figure 5.46).

IMPLEMENT THE PLAN'S MILITARY COMPATIBILITY ELEMENT

In 2019, the Youngstown Air Reserve Station completed a Joint Land Use study to "define a shared strategic plan for area jurisdictions, Youngstown ARS, and Youngstown-Warren Regional Airport to work cooperatively and collaboratively to reduce and/or eliminate compatibility issues which can negatively impact the mission of the base, and compatibility issues created by the base which can negatively impact the surrounding communities."¹

To view the full study and recommendations, visit [Appendix B](#) of this plan.

¹ Youngstown ARS, "City of Niles Comprehensive Plan Military Element." 2019. Appendix B



Figure 5.45 The Bridge Park district in Dublin, OH represents a transformative riverfront development.

(Source: Columbus Underground)

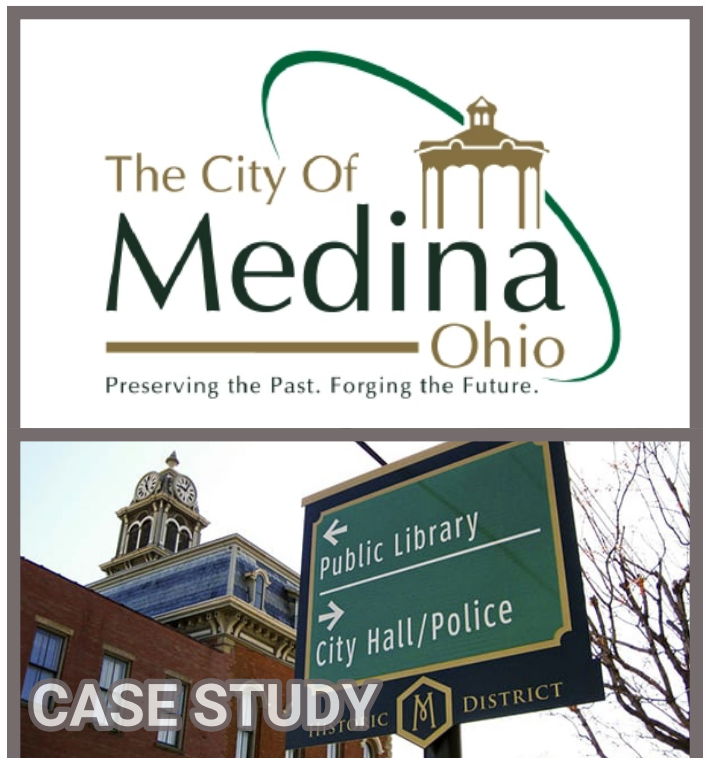


Figure 5.46 Main Street Medina – Medina, OH

The city of Medina invested in new signage that celebrates its historic character while communicating important information (cleveland.com). In addition to signage, Main Street Medina further brands the city as a thriving place to shop, dine and relax. Main Street Medina maintains a website, multiple social media pages, and a newsletter emailed to subscribers (Main Street Medina).

Economic Development

Table 5.4 Economic Development Implementation Matrix

Goal	Strategy	Priority	Timeline	Resp. Parties
Retain & Support Growth of Industrial Areas	Consider zoning ordinances that allow for workforce housing on low-impact industrial sites.	High	1-3 yr	City of Niles, Industrial Leaders
	Encourage/attract/incentivize developer(s) for workforce housing with wrap-around services.	High	1-5 yr	City of Niles
	Work in partnership with industrial companies to attract a work force.	High	Ongoing	City of Niles, Industrial Leaders, Youngstown-Warren Regional Chamber
Encourage Commercial Growth Across the City	Maintain partnership between private commercial developers and the city.	High	Ongoing	City of Niles, Cafaro Company
	Identify areas of opportunity for assemblage of property by the city in conjunction with the land bank for redevelopment	Medium	0-1 yr	City of Niles, Land Bank
	Promote economic development incentive programs	High	Ongoing	Niles Chamber of Commerce/CIC
	Hire an employee to manage social media and produce marketing materials aimed at attracting people and businesses to the city.	Low	0-1 yr	City of Niles
	Support efforts to repair and maintain Eastwood Field.	Low	Ongoing	City of Niles, Cafaro Company, Mahoning Valley Scrappers
Implement the Plan's Military Compatibility Element	Support the land use and zoning recommendations within the Youngstown Air Force Base's Joint Land Use Study. <i>To view the full Military Compatibility Element and its recommendations, go to Appendix B of this plan.</i>	High	Ongoing	City of Niles, Youngstown Air Reserve Station

FUNDING SOURCES

The following sources of funding can be used to aid implementation of the Niles Comprehensive Plan's Economic Development strategies:

- » ODOT Transformative Mixed-Use Development Program
- » Niles CBDG

Transportation

EXISTING CONDITIONS

U.S. 422 carries the heaviest traffic volumes of all roadways in Niles. A lack of sidewalks, safe crossings, and bicycle infrastructure along the corridor exclude those without a car from accessing the area's commercial uses. Multi-modal infrastructure recommendations have been included in both the 2014 Corridor Plan, and the 2023 Complete Streets Plan. WRTA Route 28, also known as the Warren Express, traverses the corridor as well, though the lack of sidewalks, poor bus stop quality, and infrequent service pose as challenges for transit riders (Figures 5.48-49).

Very few options exist to cross the Mahoning River and Mosquito Creek, which funnels all modes on to busy roads and creates longer and less safe trips for pedestrians and bicyclists. Outside of the Niles Greenway, the city lacks bicycle infrastructure, and many sidewalks and crosswalks are in need of repairs or restriping. Besides U.S. 422, public transit does not service Niles.

COMMUNITY INPUT

The lack of bicycle and pedestrian connectivity was heard from residents and city officials throughout the engagement process. The three highest transportation priority items from the survey were repaving roads, increasing the quantity of sidewalks and trails, and reducing excessive speed. An efficient means to address all 3 priorities could be to reduce lane widths and add bikes lanes when repaving roads.

A demand for more public transportation was heard from both residents and industrial leaders, who cited it as a barrier to retaining employees. Industrial leaders also dismissed the need to keep Main St a truck route, which would remove a barrier to traffic calming efforts in downtown.



Figure 5.47 Many sidewalks are in need of repair.



Figure 5.48 The majority of U.S. 422 in Niles lacks sidewalks and crosswalks.



Figure 5.49 WRTA Warren Express Route
(Source: WFMJ.com)

Transportation

ACHIEVE A SUSTAINABLE AND EFFICIENT MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Though land use plays a major role as well, transportation in Niles is car-centered due to a lack of infrastructure which supports other modes. Walkability has become an effective tool for Midwestern cities to prevent brain drain, or the departure of young professionals, with an additional benefit of accommodating the needs of Niles' aging population. Encouraging the mixing of land uses is complementary to multi-modal investments by reducing travel distances and expanding the population capable of commuting sans vehicle. The city laid out its strategy for enhancing its bicycle and sidewalk networks in its 2021 Active Transportation Plan (Figure 5.50).

Transit Service Expansion

Presently, only WRTA Express Route 28 operates along U.S. 422 in Niles, only arriving hourly. Niles is characterized by an aging population for which riding transit may be safer and more convenient than driving. Additionally, the lack of transit has been identified by employers as a barrier to attracting and retaining workers.

Complete Streets

Complete streets are those designed with all modes of transportation in mind. Sidewalks, high-visibility crosswalks, bicycle infrastructure, street trees, and enhanced transit stops are common amongst complete streets initiatives (Figure 5.51).

Traffic Calming

Reducing the speed of traffic is especially important in ensuring the comfort of all roadway users, including other vehicles. Road diets, which involve reducing lane quantity or width in exchange for adding on-street parking, medians, bike lanes, or wider sidewalks, reduce speeding by limiting the subconscious association of faster speeds with wider lanes. Physical measures include speed bumps and humps and many complete streets initiatives also qualify as traffic calming measures.

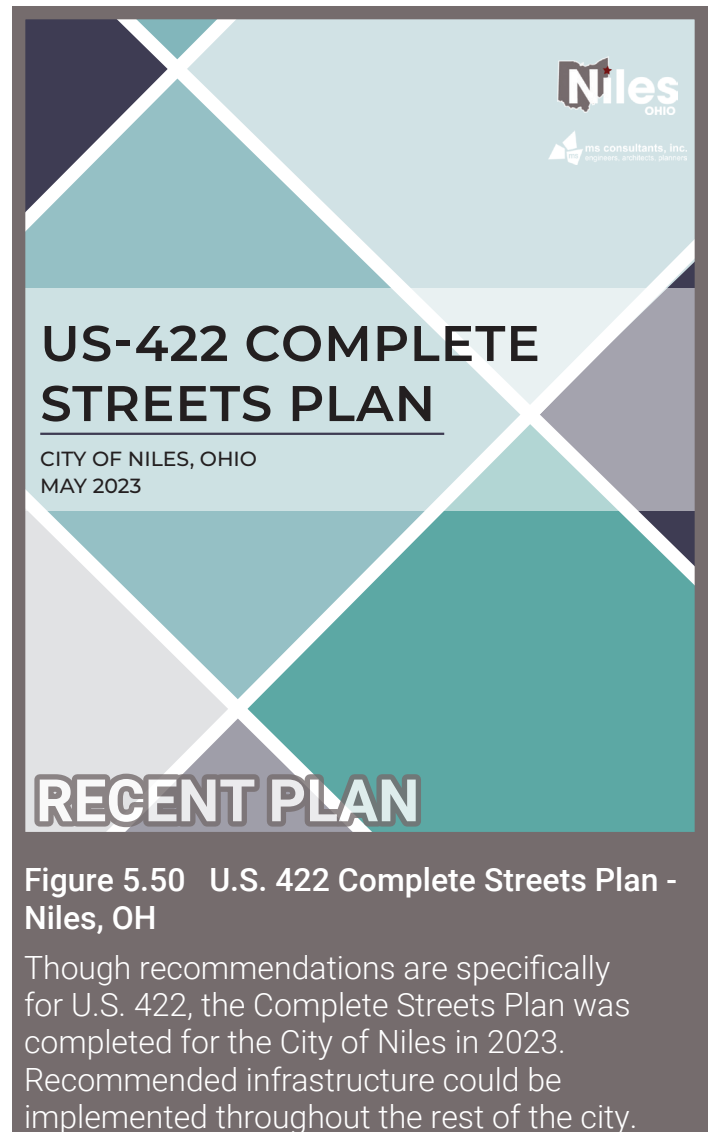


Figure 5.50 U.S. 422 Complete Streets Plan - Niles, OH

Though recommendations are specifically for U.S. 422, the Complete Streets Plan was completed for the City of Niles in 2023. Recommended infrastructure could be implemented throughout the rest of the city.



Figure 5.51 Gensese County, MI

The widespread installation of 4-lane to 3-lane road diets across the eastern Michigan county resulted in the reduction of annual crash rates across all crash types on all roads which received treatment, according to the Complete Streets Technical Report. Projects were simple restriping that could be easily reversed if results were undesired by the community.

Source: Gensese Couty Metropolitan Planning Organization

Transportation

ENSURE THE SAFETY OF NON-MOTORISTS ALONG US-422

U.S. 422 carries the city's heavy traffic volumes, and as such is designed with only vehicles in mind. The majority of the city's commercial uses exist along the corridor, many of which are essential to residents such as grocery stores. The near-complete lack of sidewalks and safe crossings restricts access to those without a vehicle. Investments in pedestrian infrastructure, transit stops, and increased transit service can benefit retailers located along the corridor and within Eastwood Mall as well by expanding the customer base.

Parking Access Management

The corridor is lined by many driveways providing access to its commercial uses. Excessive and redundant driveways can result in vehicle conflicts which contribute to crashes, along with interrupting sidewalks. Parking management plans, shared driveways, and other access management strategies will help address these issues in the future (5.52).

Upgraded Transit Service

Presently, transit stops along the corridor are without shelters and easily-visible signage in addition to the accessibility challenges associated with the lack of sidewalks especially during inclement weather. WRTA route 28 only services the corridor hourly, making it inconvenient for non-vehicle owning workers and shoppers to access the corridor from the broader region (Figure 5.53).



Figure 5.52 Frequent driveways result in vehicular conflicts.

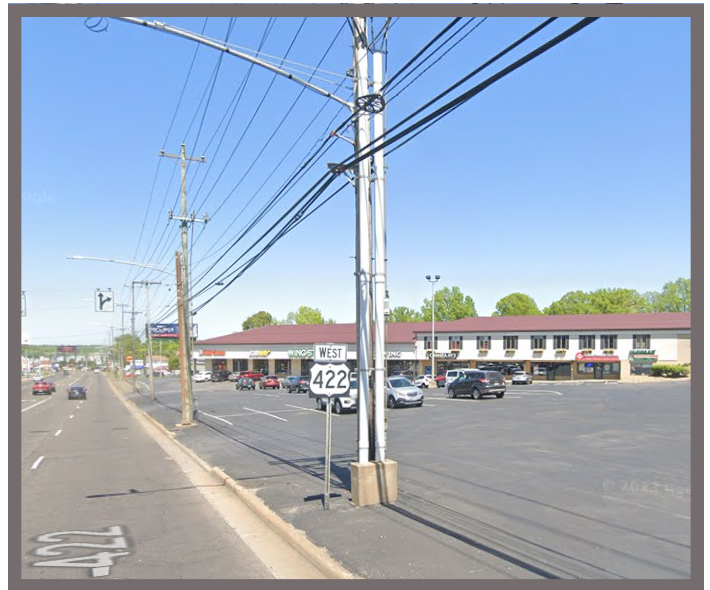


Figure 5.53 Without proper signage, it is difficult for riders to identify the location of WRTA stops.

Transportation

Table 5.5 Transportation Implementation Matrix				
Goal	Strategy	Priority	Timeline	Resp. Parties
Achieve a Sustainable & Efficient Multi-Modal Transportation Network	Improve pedestrian safety and walkability by implementing complete street initiatives.	High	5-7 yr	City of Niles, Eastgate, ODOT
	Reduce speeding by implementing traffic calming measures (curb extensions, crosswalks, road diets, etc)	High	Ongoing	City of Niles
	Add bike parking at local attractions	Low	0-1 yr	City of Niles, CIC
	Construct additional means to cross Mosquito Creek and the Mahoning River for cyclists and pedestrians	Low	3-5 yr	City of Niles, CIC
	Relocate the truck route off of Main St	Low	0-1 yr	City of Niles, ODOT
	Expand transit service to other areas of the city and construct ADA compliant transit shelters along new routes	High	3-5 yr	City of Niles, WRTA
	Continue the implementation of the 2021 Active Transportation Plan	High	Ongoing	City of Niles
	Add high visibility crosswalks	High	1-3 yr	City of Niles, Eastgate, ODOT
Ensure the Safety of Non-Motorists Along U.S. 422	Conduct parking management plans and other access management strategies to decrease excessive and redundant driveways	High	0-1 yr	City of Niles, Eastgate, ODOT
	Construct sidewalks along both sides of US 422	High	Ongoing	City of Niles, ODOT
	Add high visibility crosswalks at busy intersections along the corridor	High	1-3 yr	City of Niles, ODOT
	Reduce excessive and redundant driveways by encouraging shared driveways and parking management plans	Medium	3-5 yr	City of Niles, Private Property Owners
	Add streetscaping and branding elements along the US 422 corridor (pedestrian lighting, banners, benches, etc)	Medium	3-5 yr	City of Niles
	Upgrade transit stops by adding or improving shelters, benches, trash cans, and signage and ensuring ADA compliance	High	3-5 yr	City of Niles, Eastgate, ODOT

FUNDING SOURCES

The following sources of funding can be used to aid implementation of the Niles Comprehensive Plan's Transportation strategies:

- » ODOT Transformative Mixed-Use Development Program
- » Niles CBDG

Land Use

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The majority of Niles is zoned for single family residential uses which is reflected in the existing land use. Commercial uses in Niles are concentrated along the U.S. 422 corridor and Downtown Niles with minor segments of arterials branching out of downtown zoned commercially. Downtown Niles lacks its own zoning district or overlay district, and instead is included in the General Commercial district. Land used for industrial and manufacturing in Niles is found along the Mahoning River and along the railroad, though many sites sit vacant today. The city’s 7 parks are evenly distributed throughout the city, with Waddell Park being the largest and a destination. Despite being the most prominent geographical feature within the city, no parks or trails exist along the Mahoning River. The city’s zoning and existing land use maps can be found in Chapter 4 of this plan.

Discrepancies exist between a parcel’s zoned use and current use, particularly with multi-family residential surrounding Robbins Ave and commercial uses along N. Main St. A demand for expanding areas where these uses are allowed was expressed throughout the engagement period.

COMMUNITY INPUT

Downtown revitalization was consistently the most popular theme at nearly all engagement events and a goal shared by city leaders, the steering committee, and the public. However, this desire for a walkable district with mixed-use buildings is made difficult to accommodate due to the lack of a designated downtown zoning district or overlay. The community also showed enthusiasm for expanding small-

scale commercial uses along arterial corridors throughout the city to place shops within walking distance of neighborhoods.

CODIFY DESIRED DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Zoning regulations are used to promote the health, safety, and well-being of a community through the built environment. The zoning code enforces restrictions on land use and design to prevent the mixing of incompatible uses and further the public good. Property owners reference the zoning code to understand guidelines on growth, development, and property maintenance. For potential developers, review of the zoning regulations is often one of the first steps in determining whether to invest in a particular community. Niles needs to maintain a clear, comprehensive, and visionary zoning code to properly prepare for the desired development patterns of the community.

Zoning Code Updates

Upon completion of the comprehensive planning process, a zoning code audit can determine inconsistencies between plan objectives and existing regulations. In Niles, the demand for greater housing diversity, mixed-use development, local business growth, and riverfront recreation are much more difficult to accommodate due to zoning restrictions. Updates to the zoning code, whether by piece-meal resolutions or as a unified zoning code rewrite, should be guided by this plan’s recommendations. Specifically, the future land use map and associated districts should be used when implementing any adopted regulations.

Table 5.6 Land Use Implementation Matrix				
Goal	Strategy	Priority	Timeline	Resp. Parties
Codify Desired Development Patterns	Adopt an updated zoning map using the future land use map	High	0-1 yr	City of Niles

APPENDIX A: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT REPORT

- » Overview
- » Engagement Activity Results
- » Survey Results

Overview

Public input was integral throughout the planning process, displayed in Figure 1. Frequent coordination and feedback from city officials took place at bi-weekly meetings during the entire process and helped guide the engagement phase.

A steering committee was assembled, consisting of important community representatives and stakeholders, to guide the planning process and ensure the Final Plan fulfilled the community’s present needs and future vision.

Regular appearances at public events provided the opportunity to provide the community with updates and gather their feedback on various aspects of the final plan. These events were selected due to high attendance to maximize feedback and often involved a pop-up booth with interactive boards and activities.

Additionally, several Niles Comprehensive Plan-specific events were hosted as well, designed to gather feedback from the most-interested members of the public.



Figure 1 Public engagement timeline

Niles Municipal Building | 09/20/2022

Kickoff Event

City officials including Mayor Mientkiewicz were introduced to the consultant team and planning process. The parties reviewed the scope and schedule, established the plan's goals and project branding, and toured the City of Niles (Figure 2-3).

ACTIVITIES

City officials reviewed a map of Niles and a map of the downtown, to identify areas of growth potential and overarching community needs.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The City of Niles expressed desire for downtown to leverage its connection to President McKinley to become a cultural asset aided by beautification and redevelopment. Attracting new residents through and upgraded and more diverse housing stock was another topic of discussion. Improvements to parks and natural areas complement these goals, including new trail connections to the Niles Greenway Trail, a kayak launch along the Mahoning River, and stream restoration of Mosquito Creek. Finally, the need for zoning flexibility for development at Eastwood Mall and along Stillwagon Rd and U.S. 422 was discussed.



Figure 2 Niles Comprehensive Plan logo

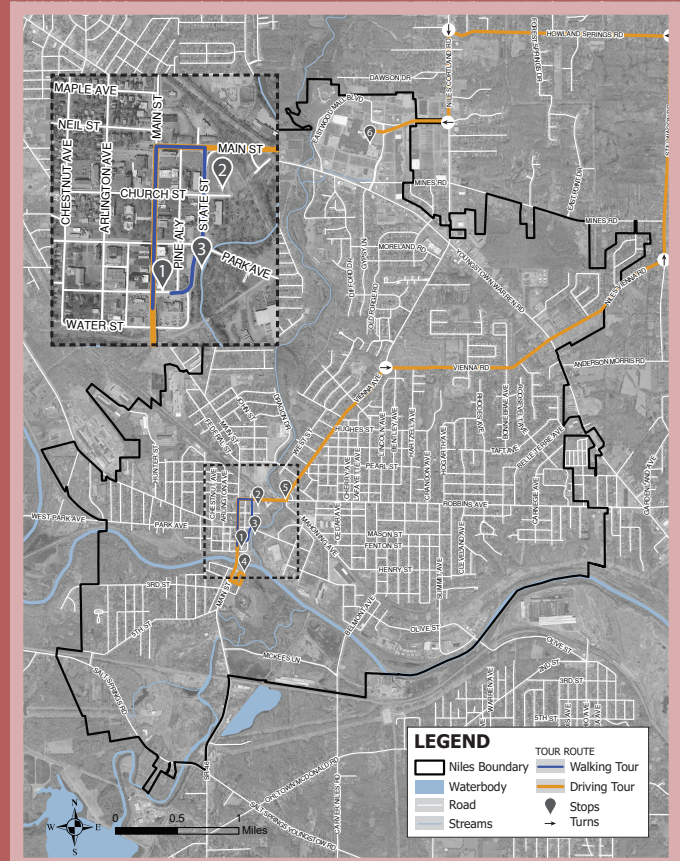


Figure 3 Community Tour Map

Niles Wellness Center | 11/03/2022

Steering Committee #1

The meeting introduced the planning team and process to the steering committee. Mayor Mientkiewicz was also in attendance.

ACTIVITIES

The committee conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis and a mapping activity which asked them which areas of the city to preserve and which areas could be enhanced (Figure 4).

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Full responses to the SWOT analysis can be found in Table 1 on this page and the next.

The city’s parks and historical sites, especially those related to President McKinley were identified as areas of strength along with the Mahoning Valley Scrappers’ stadium and Eastwood Mall which are tourist destinations.

The city’s struggles to retain both its businesses and residents and attract new ones. The cost of maintaining its infrastructure has become unsustainable due to its declining population. Transportation options are limited to a personal vehicle.

Opportunities to improve the community exist. Downtown revitalization and riverfront development can address the lack of economic development. Internet upgrades can help attract residents working in remote or hybrid settings.

Out-migration of the younger demographic pose, unattractive development sites, and a lack of jobs pose as threats to the city’s future.

Eastwood Mall and the McKinley sites in Downtown Niles were the only areas noted as areas to preserve. Parks, downtown Niles, and riverfront and creekside land were popular areas to enhance.

Strengths
City-owned electric grid – power rarely goes out or for very short period of time
Mahoning River
Downtown District
McKinley Memorial
Cafaro Corporation/Eastwood Mall, concentration of businesses, #1 Traffic destination for shopping center in OH – tourism destination
Scrappers
Quality of life, easier to get around 422 with everything being in one place, and the downtown Main street corridor. Better than Boardman’s long corridor
Central location of commercial businesses near Eastwood Mall
Community pride
Parks
Income tax – pays services/generates revenue
Brand new schools
Limitless water
Existing/established neighborhoods
Area available for affordable housing
Key Club (high school group)
Realtor Young Professionals
Niles Wellness Center
Mayor’s Vision: business friendly and positive
Greenway bike trail
Railway access – Norfolk Southern
Weaknesses
Change is very difficult for the community
Aged and landlocked housing stock
Too much downtown truck traffic on Main street
Proximity to highway access
Minimal development in all areas except Eastwood mall area

Table 1 SWOT analysis full results (Continued on next page)

77% of students are on free and reduced lunch
No formalized business retention plan
Lack of marketing about the good reasons to be here (only negative)
Need better recreational teams (i.e. football (AKA soccer), sports that other cultures like
Aging/cost to maintain infrastructure and dealing unfunded mandates by the OEPA (backflow, lead)
Infrastructure improvements funded with taxes paid by citizens and declining population can't afford to pay for too large infrastructure (need to right-size infrastructure)
Lack of quality multi-family housing /rentals
Transportation options; no rideshare/Uber services declined since COVID
Lack of incentives for diverse housing types
Lack of economic tools being utilized (i.e. TIF, CRA) to incentivize and retain
Rotary/Kiwanis struggling
Young Professionals groups are regional
No rec soccer opportunity (don't utilize Wellness Center)
Small/multiple ownership parcels on 422 near mall (need help from a CIC type organization to help combine parcels for development)
Lack of developable industrial sites
Lack of entertainment and night life options
Visually unattractive train cars and bridges
Opportunities
Reliable/secure internet for remote work
Could offer 2 broadband network – have a small city-owned network already
Kayak/ canoe launch
Foxcon, Ultium proximity
Downtown is ready for more amenities
The traffic tourism from Eastwood
Park system: established, ready for amenities
Own 3 utilities – local control
Have room at Eastwood mall and other areas for higher density housing
Cultural liaison possibilities

Cultural melting pot – how do we recapture these historic corridors
Re-envision and redevelop existing neighborhoods (especially on the eastside)
Existing demand for affordable housing
Can leverage church communities
Large recreation complexes for sport are missing regionally
Developable land still available
Partnership opportunities public/private
Help expand small businesses
Wayfinding opportunities to direct people while at the mall to areas around the mall
Threats
Access to highway is too far
Eastwood mall/422 only area for econ. development
High cost associated with electricity infrastructure
Losing younger population (18-35 years old) out migration
Current industrial sites unattractive to new business
Income tax
Population decline – infrastructure needs right sized
Southern Cleveland suburbs are attracting workforce away from Trumbull
Cost of utility maintenance
People leaving to go where jobs are
Livable wage – not earning enough
Lack of quality multi-family housing
Service agencies are shrinking (i.e. rotary)
Advancements in technology leading people away from libraries

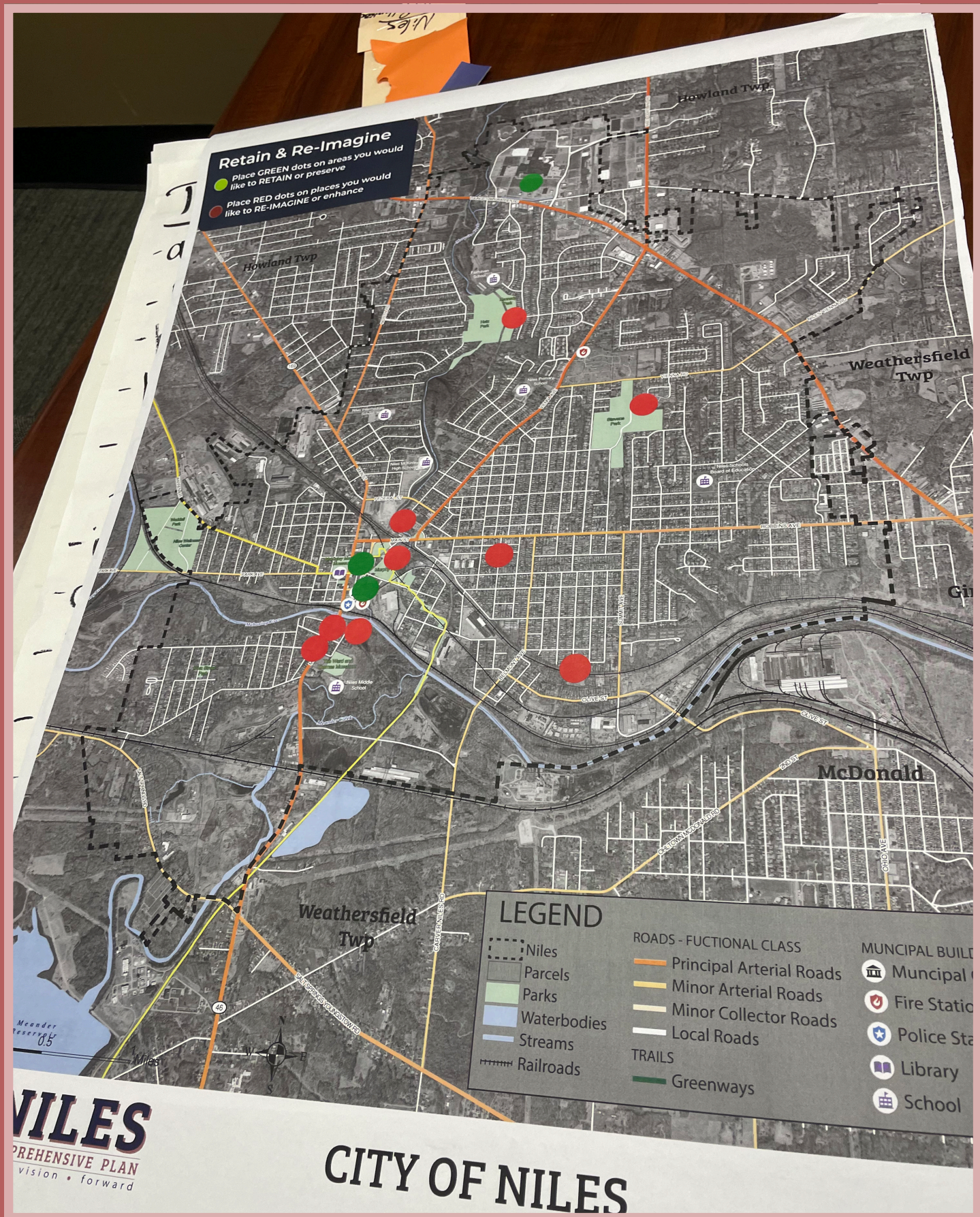


Figure 4 Results of the Retain/Re-imagine Activity. Green dots were placed on areas which steering committee members wanted to preserve. Red dots were placed on areas which members wanted to re-imagine.

Winter Pop-Up

The consultant team attended the Fire Station’s Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony, where they introduced the comprehensive planning process, promoted the public survey, and conducted an activity with community members.

ACTIVITIES

In the spirit of the holidays, participants were asked to write what they would give to Niles.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Table 2 shows the full results of the engagement activity, from which the following takeaways were derived:

- » A high demand for housing exists within the community.
- » People want to visit downtown, but there isn’t enough to do.
- » More community events, programs, and festivals are desired.

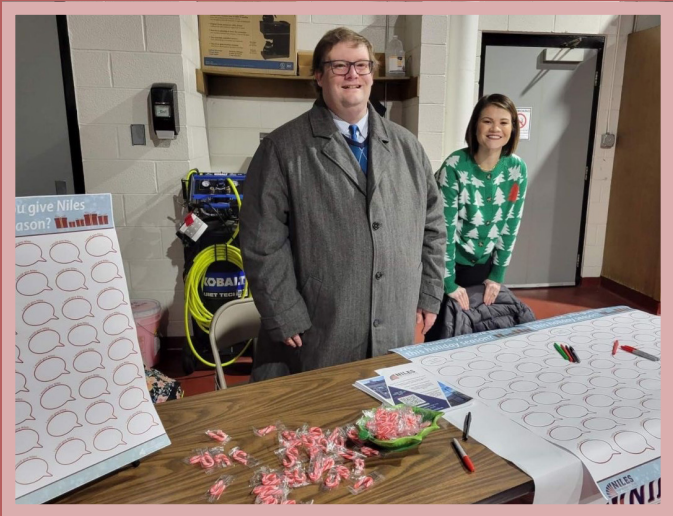


Figure 5 Pop-up table at the holiday event

"What would you give Niles this Holiday season?"
Better water pressure in the city
No bike trail on Belle Terre
Indoor high school track facility
More community festivals
More land
More parking
More housing
More housing
Improve infrastructure
Free firework show on the 4th of July
More businesses downtown
A Dave and Busters
Thriving downtown businesses with live music, brewery, and shopping
A dragon drop in Niles on NYE
Splash pad

Table 2 Posterboard activity results

Focus Groups

The consultant team conducted interviews with the following groups (Figures 6-8).

- » City Council Members
- » Industrial Leaders
- » Parks and Recreation Department

ACTIVITIES

Interviews consisted of questions pertaining to the existing conditions, goals, and constraints within Niles relating to each associated group.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Each of the three groups put valuable input towards the plan, summarized below:

City Council Members

- » Demand for downtown revitalization
- » Need for increased trail quantity & connectivity
- » Concerns about downtown parking
- » Demand for increased housing quality & affordability

Industrial Leaders

- » Difficulty finding workers due to transportation & housing costs
- » Interest in employer-provided workforce housing
- » High demand for the expansion of public transportation
- » Lack of need for the truck route along Main St

Parks and Recreation

- » County-wide demand for walking trails and local need for improved trail and park connectivity
- » Increased winter recreation options & programs
- » Maintenance is the primary concern



Figure 6 Industrial Leader Focus Group



Figure 7 Parks and Recreation Focus Group



Figure 8 Student Panel

Niles McKinley High School | 01/24/2023

Student Workshop

A major concern for cities like Niles is retaining its youth. Gaining insights into what they enjoy and want to improve in Niles can help the city plan with retention in mind.

25 students and staff at Niles High School, the Mayor and City staff, and the consultant team attended the focus group (Figure 9).

ACTIVITIES

The mayor, members of the city staff, and consultant team gave a presentation about the planning process. Afterwards, the students participated in a presentation, and land use/ stakeholder game, and SWOT analysis.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Figure 10 shows the full results of the student SWOT analysis, which are summarized in the following paragraphs.

The city's park facilities, including trails and the wellness center, the Eastwood Mall, and the Mahoning Valley Scrappers baseball team are all attractions which were considered strengths. The city's connection to William McKinley and its historic football program were strong cultural elements identified.

Age was constantly discussed among weaknesses, especially regarding roads, parks, and housing. A lack of pedestrian and bicycle amenities and connectivity was also identified.

Students viewed downtown revitalization, economic development, and more community events, programs, and activities as prominent opportunities to improve their city.

The main threat to Niles is the attractiveness of surrounding communities, which have more things to do and better housing quality.



Figure 9 Images from the Student Workshop

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
The mall/shopping	No track	Events and activities	Internal conflicts within school
Restaurants	Parks are starting to get older	Strengthen community spirit	Canfield - nicer homes
Parks	Lots of trash	Bring small businesses into the downtown area	Girard
Wellness center	Different landlord laws	More economic output - creates revenue	Boardman - bigger, more stuff, better quality things, more modern
Schools, school proximity, updated buildings	Not safe for biking everywhere but would like to be able to	If there was more downtown they would want to go there - do a survey for what kinds of shops people want things that aren't already at Eastwood	Hubbard
Governance	Not enough identity/ community spirit	Improve parks - all of them, especially sports	Old housing stock
Cheap utilities	Needs more flowers	Snow sports - skiing, nowhere to sled	The weather
The library/McKinley	Sidewalks	McKinley Library, his home	Not the same job opportunities
Bike trail/greenway	Lots of rentals	Charity walks and runs	
Formatted well - land use is complementary	No drive-in movies	Weekly business highlights	
Honda Hills	The better/nicer restaurants are in other communities (Avalon)	Outdoor movie nights, concerts, cook offs, festivals, block parties, clean-up day	
Own our own utilities (electric)	Not enough support for levies	Mahoning River kayaking	
The Thomas House	Potholes	Food trucks	
Scrappers	No pool		
Football program - historic	No lacrosse		
Good English dept in schools			
Mount Carmel Fest			

Figure 10 Full responses from the SWOT Analysis activity

Steering Committee #2

The consultant team provided updates on the public engagement process to the committee before they reviewed the existing conditions report draft.

Proposed sites for priority development areas (PDAs), were finalized and ideas for potential uses were discussed.

ACTIVITIES

The general areas of PDAs were determined in advance. The consultant team provided maps of these areas, including recommended parcels based on a site analysis.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Figures 11-13 show the recommended sites which were decided upon by the committee. Information about the sites and their proposed uses are summarized below.

E Park St Priority Development Area

Parcel #25-900637 was initially proposed as a PDA site but parcel 25-900944 was selected in order to include upgrades to the Niles Greenway Trail and Murphy Park alongside its proposed use as a workforce housing development (Figure 11).

South Main Street Priority Development Area

The vacant and empty parcel near Niles Middle School was selected by the steering committee, but no use was proposed at the time of this meeting (Figure 12).

North Main Street Priority Development Area

Currently occupied by vacant buildings, the northwest corner of Main St and W State St will be reimaged as a downtown entertainment district (Figure 13).

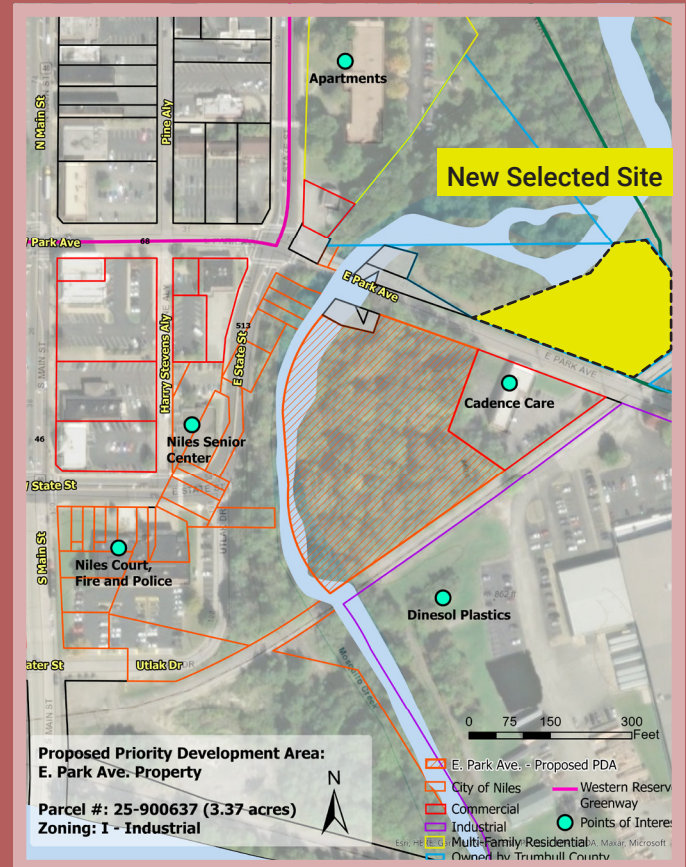


Figure 11 E Park Street initial proposed site and final selected site

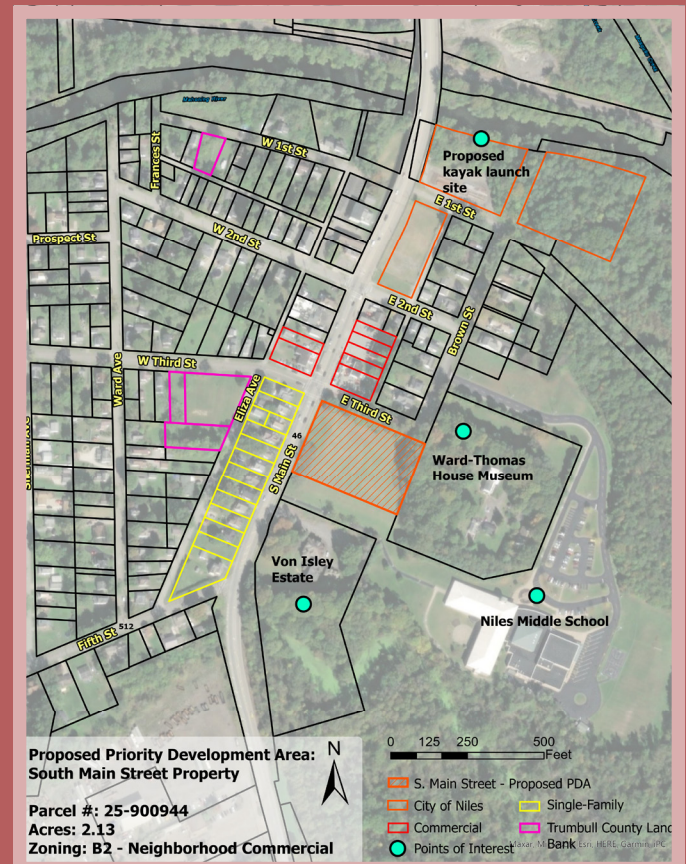


Figure 12 South Main Street proposed site

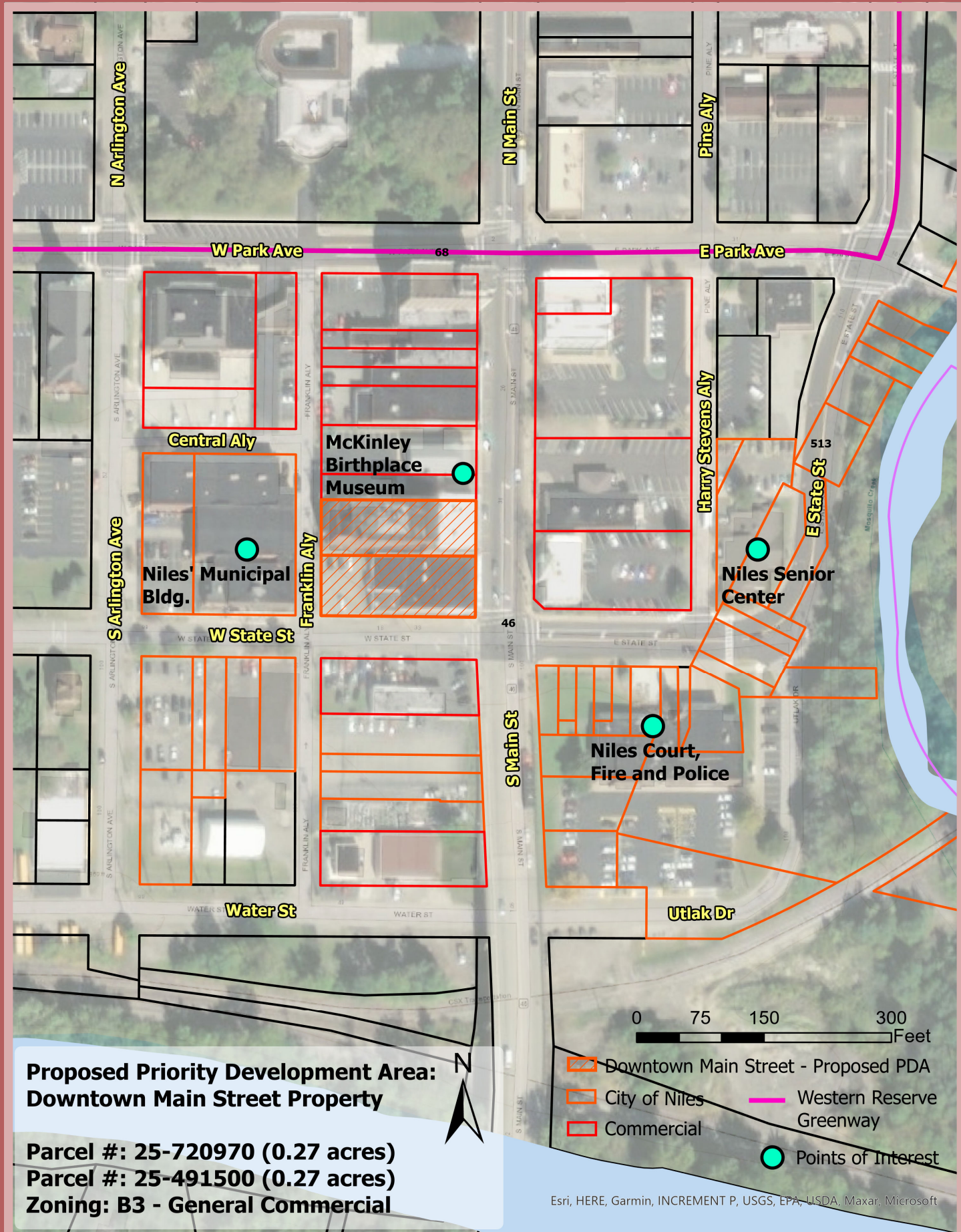


Figure 13 North Main Street proposed site

Steering Committee #3

The consultant team provided an update on the community survey and presented its findings and preliminary downtown Priority Development Area Plan designs to the Niles Steering Committee.

ACTIVITIES

The consultant team unveiled preliminary designs for the North Main St and E Park St PDAs, the former of which had two options, in order to gather feedback for revisions.

The steering committee also viewed and gave feedback on two concepts for a downtown Small Area Plan, which included streetscaping, locations of crosswalk safety enhancements, possible locations for infill development and public spaces.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Figure 14 shows concept 2 of the N Main St PDA, which was the preferred option. The committee preferred concept 2's movable seating options and permanent public art installations. The committee was excited about the opportunity to showcase the skill of local artists on the proposed mural wall. Including low maintenance elements in proposals was another suggestion.

Figure 16 shows the conceptual design for the E Park St PDA which was presented.

Table 3 shows the differences between the two small area plan concepts (Figures 17 and 18). Concept 1 was preferred due to its less intensive development. The proposed pedestrian alleyway and high visibility crosswalks each received especially positive feedback. The ability to maintain street trees was a concern, which could be alleviated by choosing planter boxes instead.



Figure 14 N Main St PDA Concept 1



Figure 15 N Main St PDA Concept 2



Figure 16 E Park Ave PDA Concept



Figure 17 Small Area Plan Option 1: Lower Development Intensity



Figure 18 Small Area Plan Option 2: Higher Development Intensity

COMMON FEATURES
High visibility crosswalks with bumpouts
Midblock crosswalks
Street trees, benches, and pedestrian lighting
Gateway signage
On-street parking
Downtown pocket park
Mosquito Creek overlook
Pedestrian-only alley in Harry Stevens Aly

#	KEY DIFFERENCES PRESENT IN OPTION 2
1	Parking garage
2	Infill development on existing surface parking
3	Picnic area
4	Public restroom in pedestrian alley

Table 3 Common features and key differences between the small area plan preliminary design options which were proposed on 05/24/2023

McKinley Library | 06/08/2023

Niles Strawberry Festival

The consultant team hosted a pop-up display at the Niles Strawberry Festival to gather community feedback on proposed improvements to downtown Niles.

ACTIVITIES

Attendees placed strips of paper inside envelopes corresponding to various amenity options in the Downtown PDA and filled out a questionnaire regarding the future of their Downtown.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Figures 19-23 show the full results of the engagement activities and are summarized in the paragraphs below.

If development were to occur in downtown Niles, respondents would prefer it to take the form of multi-story buildings with a mix of uses. When asked specifically about housing development, mixed-use was the overwhelming favorite.

Throughout the downtown district, participants wanted to see shops and restaurants complemented by outdoor dining and providing amenities along Mosquito Creek.

Specifically in the proposed N Main St park, residents cared about bringing activities and events to the space such as food trucks, markets, and concerts with seating for attendees.

Residents opposed the idea of a downtown parking garage.

Figure 19 Question 1: How tall are the buildings you picture, and how mixed are the building uses generally?

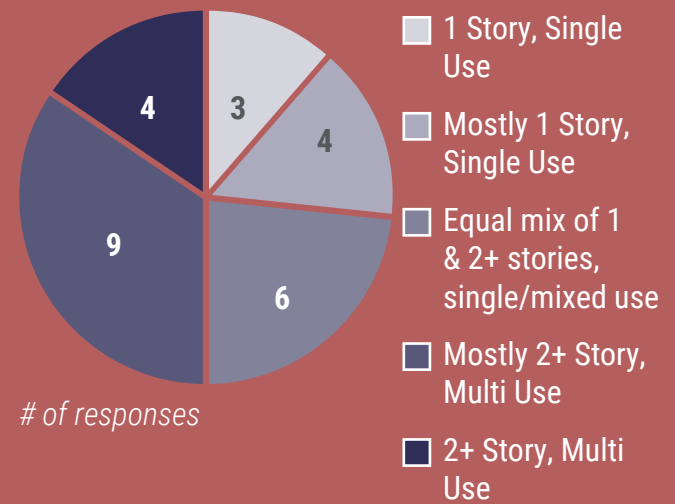


Figure 20 Question 2: Which type of housing development do you want to see in Downtown Niles?

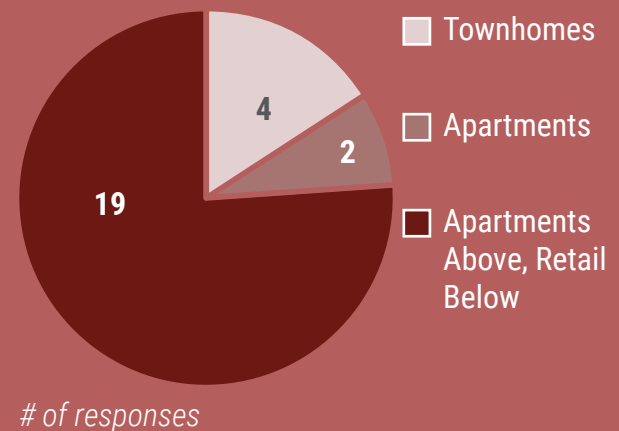


Figure 21 Question 3: Pick the top 3 things you would love to see in Downtown:

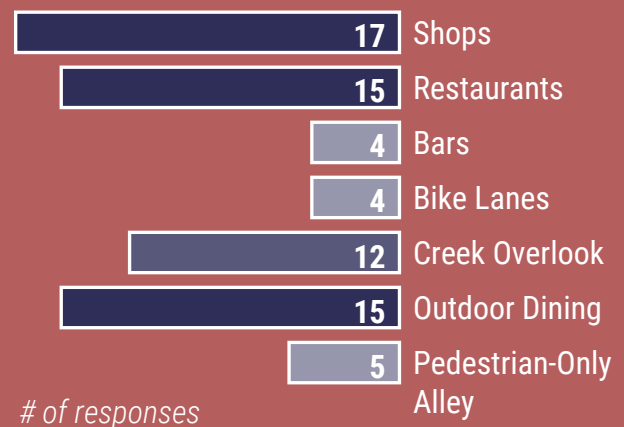


Figure 22 Question 4: How tall are the buildings you picture, and how mixed are the building uses generally?

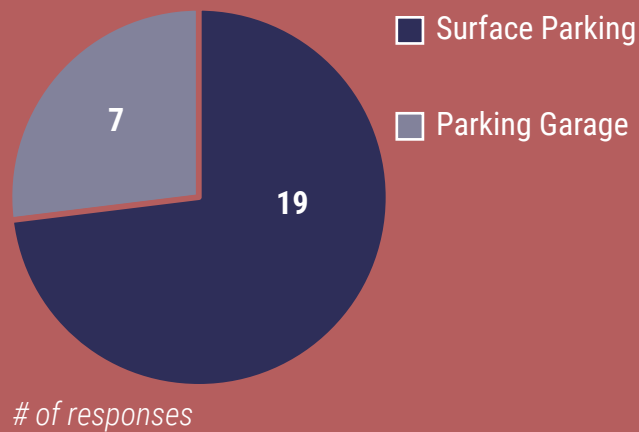
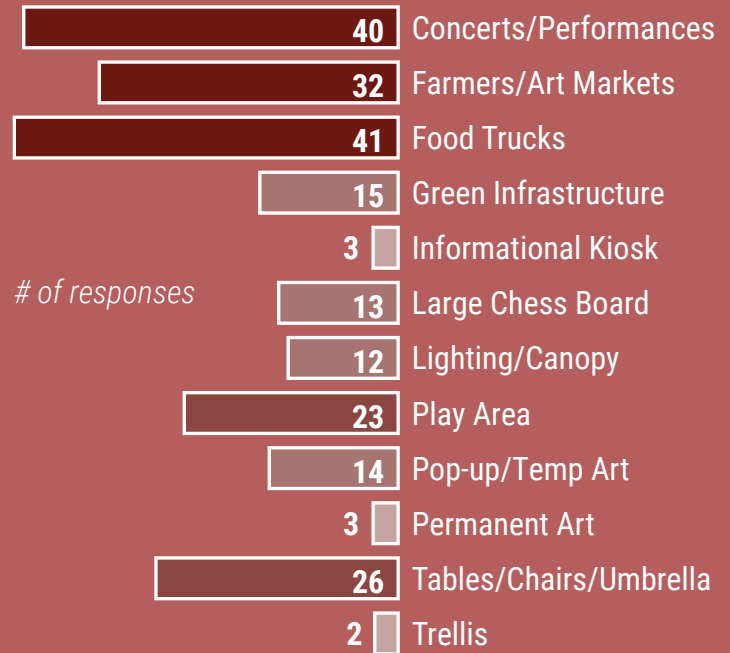


Figure 23 Question 5: Pick 3 amenities to go into the new downtown pocket park:



What's your ideal Downtown look like?

What land uses exist there? How bustling are the streets?

Tell Us Your Thoughts!

Grab a blank slip, answer the following, and submit to the box!

More?

Visit nilesforward.com to tell us more!

1. How tall are the buildings you picture, and how mixed are the building uses generally?

Only one-story buildings with single uses (a) — Mostly one-story with only one use (b) — An equal mixture of both (c) — Mostly two-stories or more with varied uses (d) — All multi-story buildings with mixed uses (e)

2. Which type of new housing development do you want to see in Downtown Niles?

Townhouses

Typical Apartments

Apartments Above, Retail Below

3. Pick the top 3 things you would love to see in Downtown Niles:

4. Pick a Parking Type:

Surface Parking:
PRO: easy to access
CON: takes away space from other possible buildings

Parking Garage:
PRO: efficient use of space & allows room for more buildings
CON: more expensive up-front

Figure 24 Posterboard with the engagement questions

Steering Committee #4

The consultant team presented its methodology and preliminary Future Land Use Map to the Niles Steering Committee, who gave feedback.

ACTIVITIES

The meeting included a presentation to the Steering Committee, during which the steering committee helped revise the plan goals. The meeting concluded by splitting into groups and allowing committee members to workshop the Future Land Use by writing their feedback on the large printed map.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Figures 25-27 show the maps with each group's comments, which are summarized in the following paragraphs.

The committee requested that the map should replace some Mixed-Residential district areas with Traditional Residential instead. In its initial proposed state, the former allowed for a diversity of housing types and small-scale, local businesses and services.

The committee agreed with the community's desire for more local businesses, and supported the proposed "Urban Edge" district, which would allow for commercial uses along busier streets in Niles.

The committee also expressed a desire to surround Downtown Niles with districts allowing commercial uses in order to bring more development to the area.

The neighborhood located between Robbins Ave, Downtown Niles, the Mahoning River, and Summitt Ave was highlighted by multiple groups as a potential area for mixed-use redevelopment.

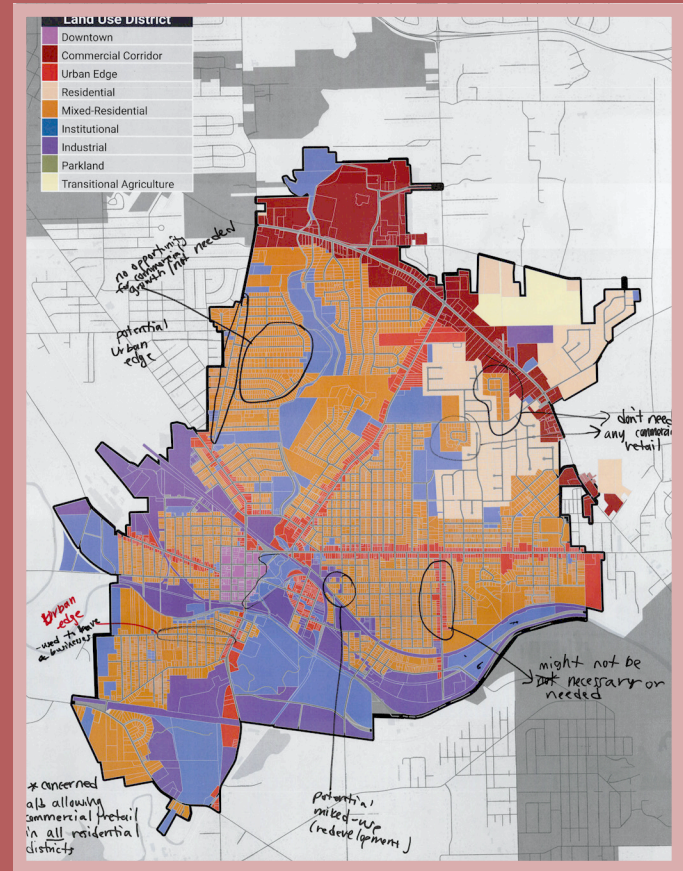


Figure 25 Breakout Group 1 Workshopped Map

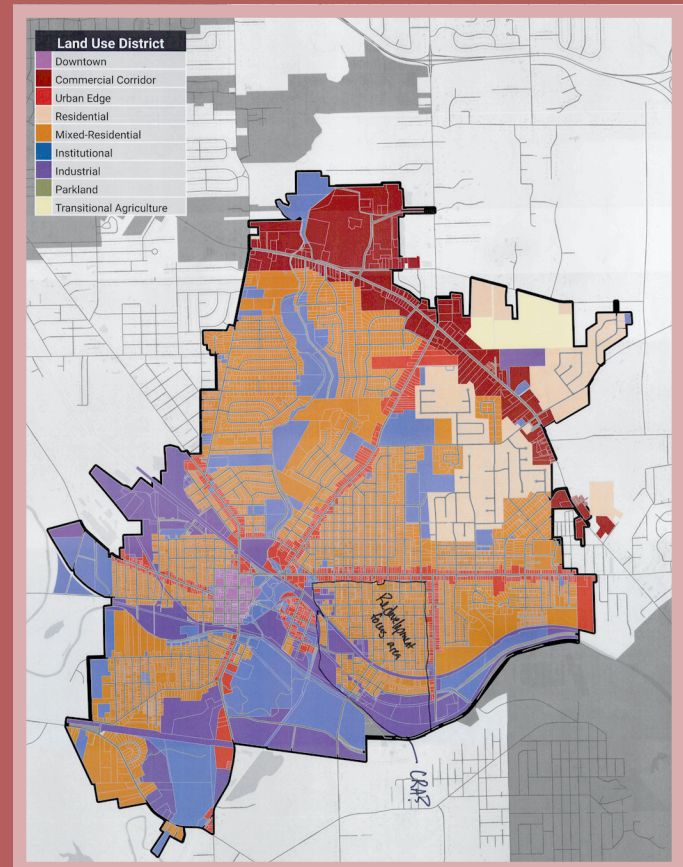


Figure 26 Virtual Group Workshopped Map

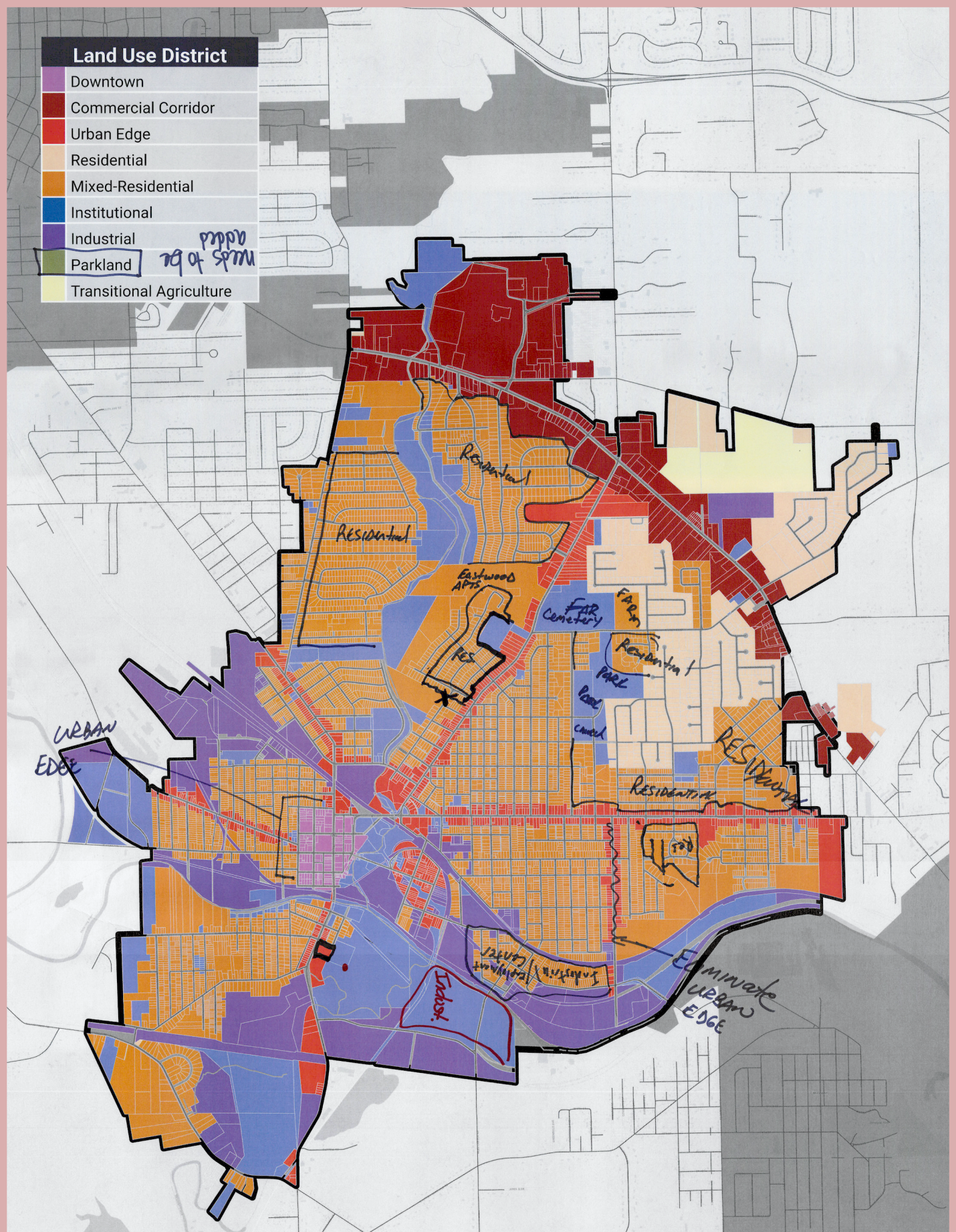


Figure 27 Breakout Group 2 Workshopped Map

08/28/2023

Community Open House

The consultant team shared the results of the comprehensive planning process to date as the public engagement phase drew to a close.

ACTIVITIES

The meeting began with a presentation involving findings and results, before opening up the room to allow community members to preview various elements of the final plan on poster boards.

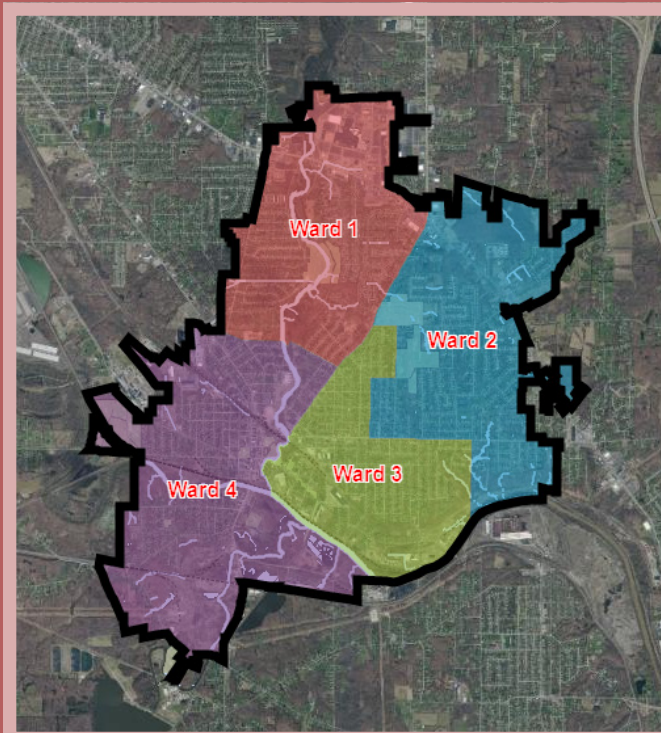
2 boards were designed to gather community feedback on future land use. The first of which presented a range of housing options and asked participants to place dots corresponding to areas of the city where they would like to see each type. Another board presented a map of Niles and asked participants to place dots along roadway corridors where they would like to see small business growth.

The boards were also made available at the Niles Senior Center, Cadence Coffee, Dairy Queen, and the Niles Wellness Center for one day each in the week following the open house.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

There is a high demand for housing throughout the entire city, but especially in Downtown Niles. Though single-family homes were the most popular option, apartments and townhomes also received moderate support. In Ward 4, which includes downtown, Mixed-Use was overwhelming the favorite (Figure 28).

Participants wanted to see commercial development in and around Downtown Niles, including south of the Mahoning River along Main St. Other locations included Robbins Ave and U.S. 422 (Figure 29).



	Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4	Everywhere	Nowhere	Total
Housing Type							
Single Family Homes	1	1	1	1	7		11
ADUs		1	1		2		4
Townhomes	1		1	1	2		5
Apartments					2	4	6
Mixed-Use			1	5	1	1	8
Total	2	2	4	7	14	5	34

Figure 28 Full results of the residential land use activity and wards map

SMALL BUSINESS CORRIDORS

Corridors

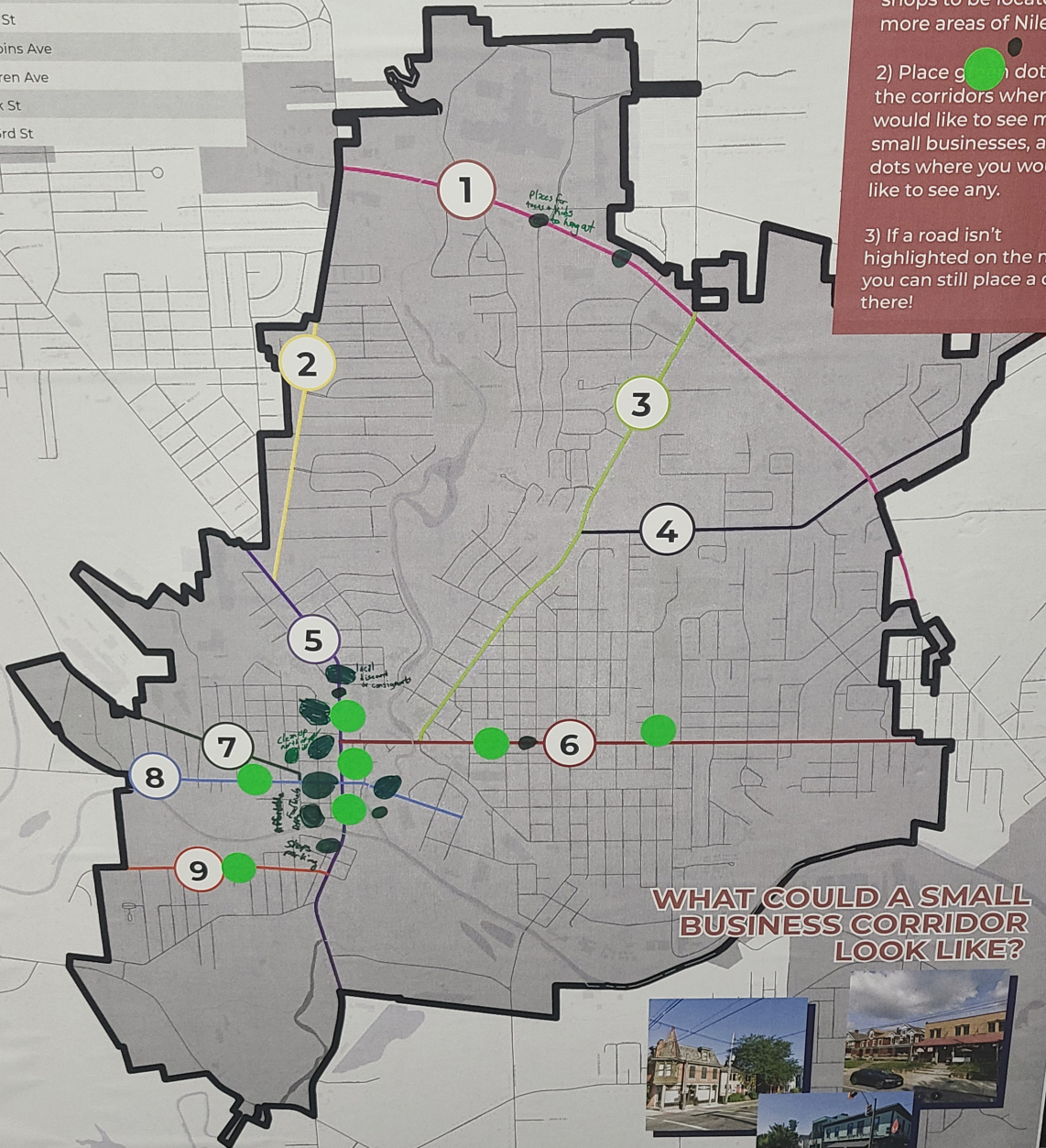
- 1 U.S. 422
- 2 North Rd
- 3 Vienna Ave
- 4 Niles-Vienna Rd
- 5 Main St
- 6 Robbins Ave
- 7 Warren Ave
- 8 Park St
- 9 W 3rd St

DIRECTIONS

1) The steering committee has helped identify potential locations for "Urban Edge" corridors, which would allow small businesses like coffee shops to be located in more areas of Niles.

2) Place green dots on the corridors where you would like to see more small businesses, and red dots where you would not like to see any.

3) If a road isn't highlighted on the map, you can still place a dot there!



WHAT COULD A SMALL BUSINESS CORRIDOR LOOK LIKE?



Figure 29 Small Business Corridor Mapping Results

10/05/2023

Steering Committee #5

The steering committee convened for the final meeting in early October to summarize their contributions to the plan’s production.

ACTIVITIES

The consultant team gave a presentation which summarized the planning process to date and the next steps for the plan as it was being prepared to be sent to the city for adoption. The final future land use map was presented to the committee with the changes made as a result of feedback from the fourth steering committee and public open house.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Changes were made to the future land use map as a result of feedback heard from the fourth steering committee and public open house, which are shown in Figure 30.

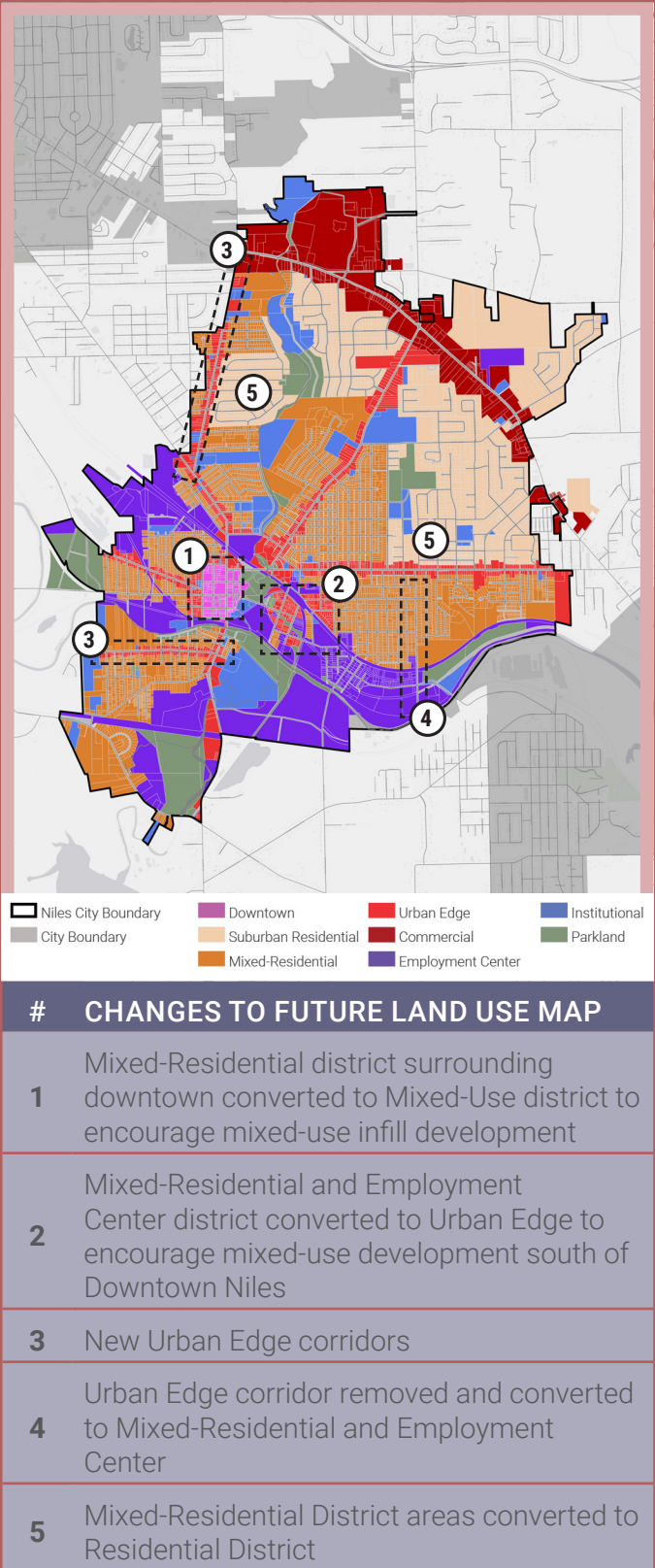


Figure 30 Updated Future Land Use Map

Online Survey

OVERVIEW

The online survey was open from the end of November, 2022 to the beginning of April, 2023. 334 responses were submitted in total. Survey respondents were asked about the existing conditions in Niles, what topics the comprehensive plan should address, and what they thought the top priorities should be.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF RESPONDENTS

As figure 31 displays, 89 percent of survey respondents live in Niles and 27 percent work in Niles. 41 respondents (12%) reported that they visit Niles often and 58 percent have family and friends in Niles. Of the 12 respondents that answered “other” in response to their relationship to Niles, five have children that attend Niles schools and three grew up in Niles, but no longer live in town.

The majority of respondents (50%) are between the ages of 35 and 54, 19 percent are 55 to 64, 13 percent are 25 to 34, and 10 percent are over the age of 65. About two thirds of survey respondents were female (65%) and 90 percent of respondents are white. Responses were well distributed across the income spectrum (Figures 32-35).

Most survey respondents reported being married with children and 11 percent of respondents said they were unmarried in a household with multiple occupants. The survey did not make a distinction between roommates, unmarried couples or other household makeups, but several of the respondents that indicated “other” specified that they were single with children (2%). Figure 36 shows the household types reported by survey respondents.

Based on reported demographic information, survey respondents are representative of Niles income and racial demographics, but households with children are over-represented in the data compared to Niles as a whole. Paired with the high percentage of women that responded to the

Figure 31 Total number of survey respondents by relationship to Niles



Figure 32 Percent of survey respondents by age

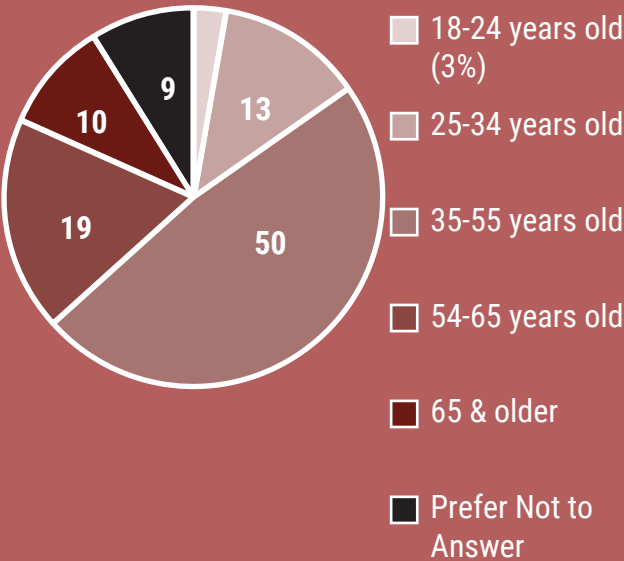
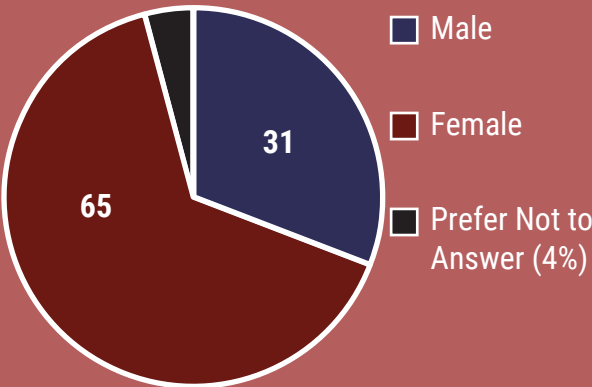


Figure 33 Percent of survey respondents by gender



survey, it is reasonable to assume that mothers of children in Niles make up a sizable portion of respondents and results may reflect that perspective.

PLAN TOPICS

Figure 37 shows the topics respondents thought the plan should cover. The top three topics respondents thought it was important for the plan to address were the economy (86%), housing (62%), and the environment (57%). Common topics indicated in “other” answers were parks and recreation, the school system, blight and/or crime, and improving confidence in the local government.

NILES PRIORITIES

When asked what the top three priorities for Niles should be, the top priorities were: attracting new local businesses and jobs (75%), enhancing park and recreation amenities (65%), improving transportation safety and infrastructure (65%), retaining existing residents and attracting new residents (53%), and lastly preserving the natural environment (24%). Again, schools and addressing blighted or poorly maintained properties were frequently mentioned in “other” answers (Figure 38).

HOUSING

The survey addressed housing and utility needs and found that slightly over half of respondents believe their current needs are met and will be met in the future (Figures 40-41). Less than 10% felt their needs weren’t met and wouldn’t be met in the future. Notably, 21% said their current housing needs are met but not expected to be in the future, likely due to rising costs and a preference for walkable, mixed-use housing. The top priorities for housing in Niles include constructing sidewalks and trails, developing new housing options, and increasing access to parks, reflecting a desire for walkable neighborhoods (Figure 42). Respondents also frequently mentioned concerns about housing and utility affordability.

Figure 34 Percent of survey respondents by race

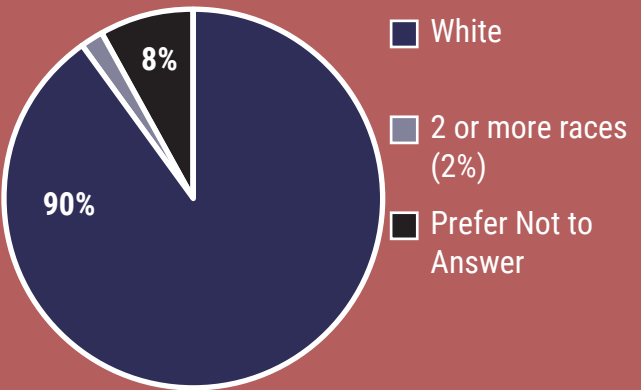


Figure 35 Percent of survey respondents by income

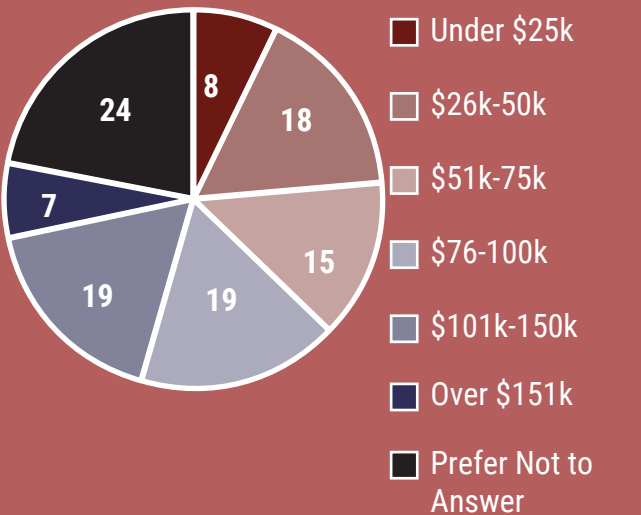
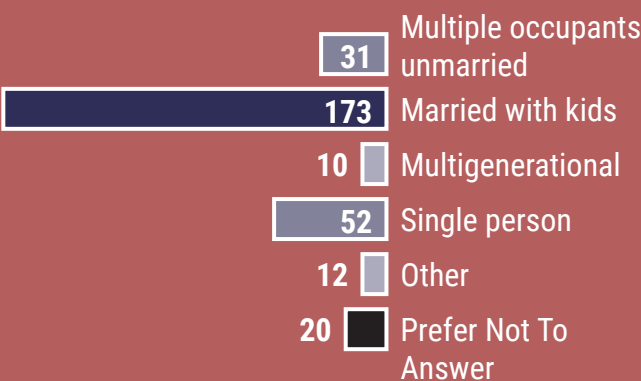


Figure 36 Number of survey respondents by type of household



RECREATION

Access to recreational opportunities is a rising trend in planning. The survey responses indicate that this holds true for Niles. More than half of respondents said their needs in regards to parks and open spaces were not currently being met, but responses were split whether respondents felt they would be met in the future (Figure 43). The top priority for parks and open spaces is improving the quality of existing parks, suggesting that people feel that there are opportunities for recreation in Niles that just need to be updated or maintained (Figure 44). The next most frequently selected priorities, with more than 50 percent each, are creating more recreational opportunities on the Mahoning River, increasing recreational programming, and making it easier to walk or bike to existing parks. The most common response in “other” answers were comments about upgrading or improving maintenance of existing facilities.

DOWNTOWN

The survey focused on understanding how people in Niles utilize downtown, revealing that roughly 25% visit weekly, 25% visit a few times a year, and 13% never visit (Figure 47). The majority, 84%, expressed a desire for more restaurants and shops to encourage more frequent visits (Figure 3.48). Additionally, beautification and community events were important to 50% of respondents. Supporting small businesses was the top priority for 85% of those surveyed, followed by preserving historic buildings for more than half (Figure 48). About 40% indicated a need for updated zoning codes, diverse housing options, and addressing maintenance concerns. Respondents also mentioned creating entertainment opportunities for families and children.

Figure 37 What are the three most important topics the Niles Comprehensive Plan should address?

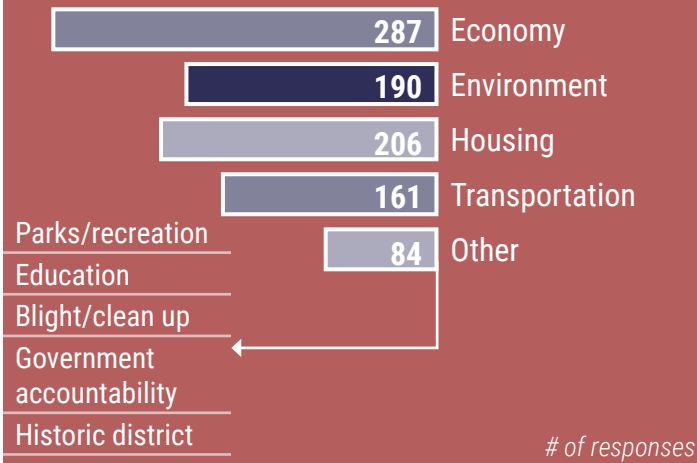


Figure 38 What are the three most important priorities for Niles?

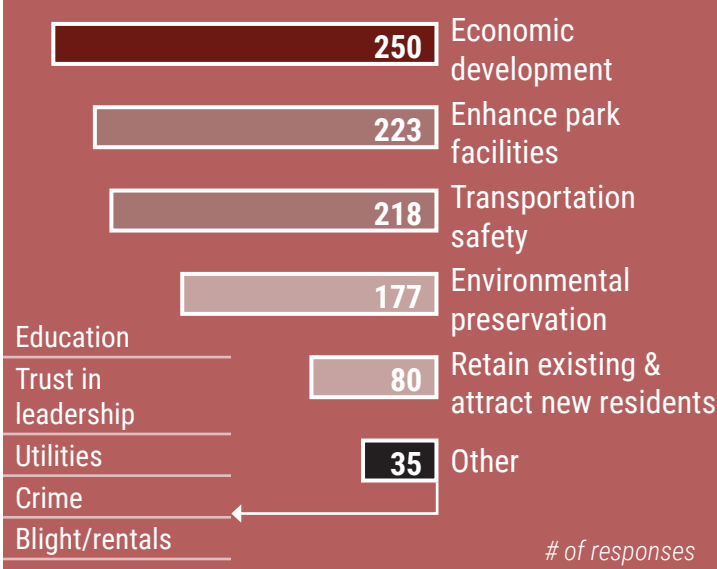


Figure 39 What are the three most important development priorities for Niles?

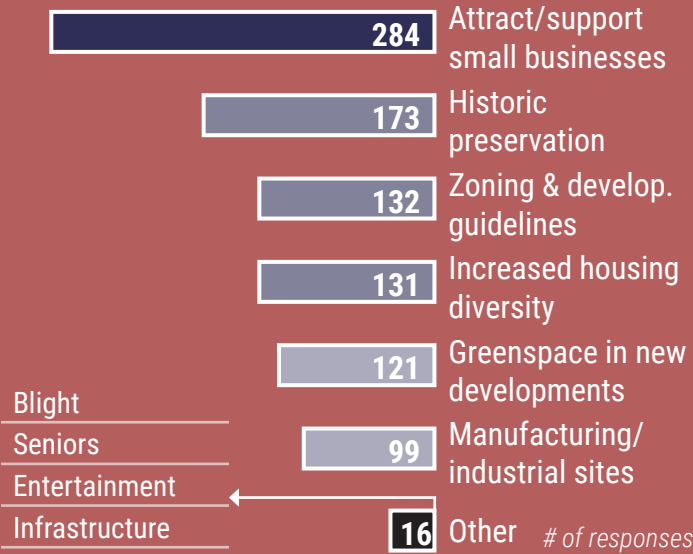


Figure 41 How does the City of Niles' housing stock fit your needs?

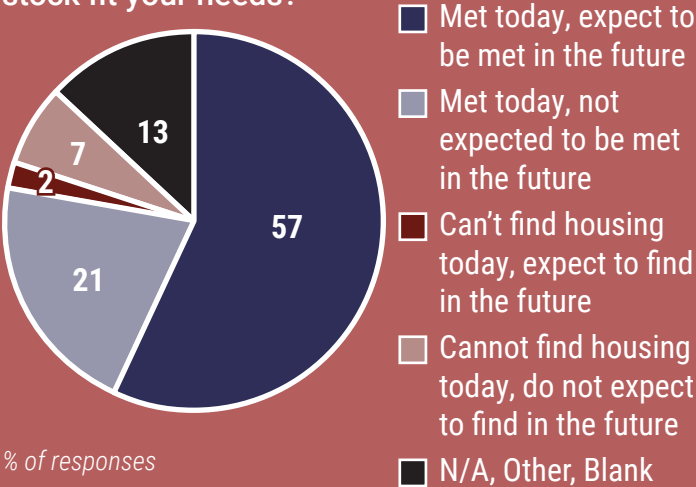


Figure 40 How do the City of Niles' utilities meet your needs?

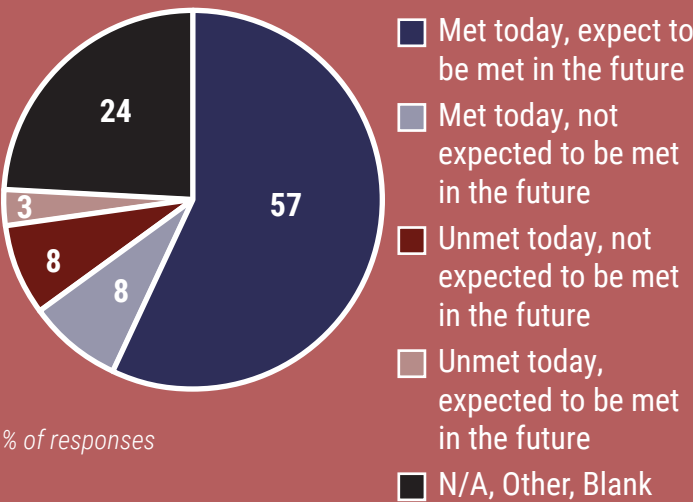


Figure 42 What are the three most important priorities regarding housing in Niles?

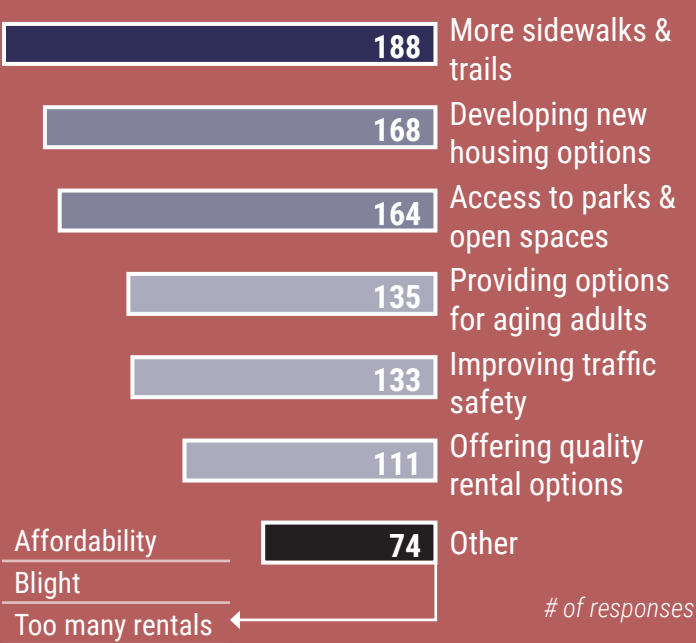
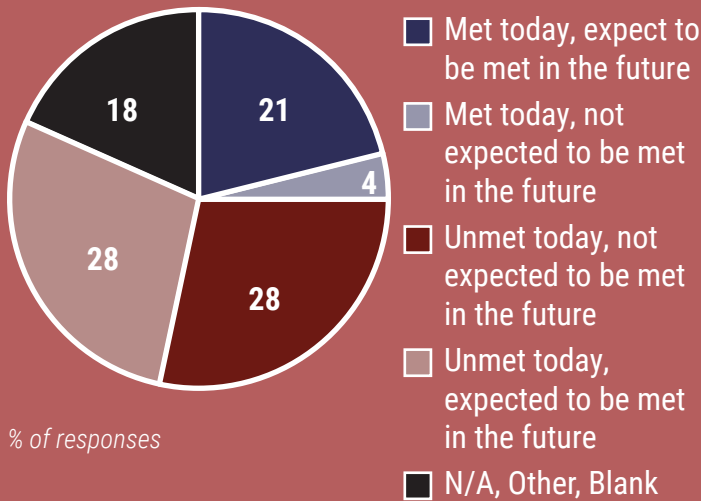
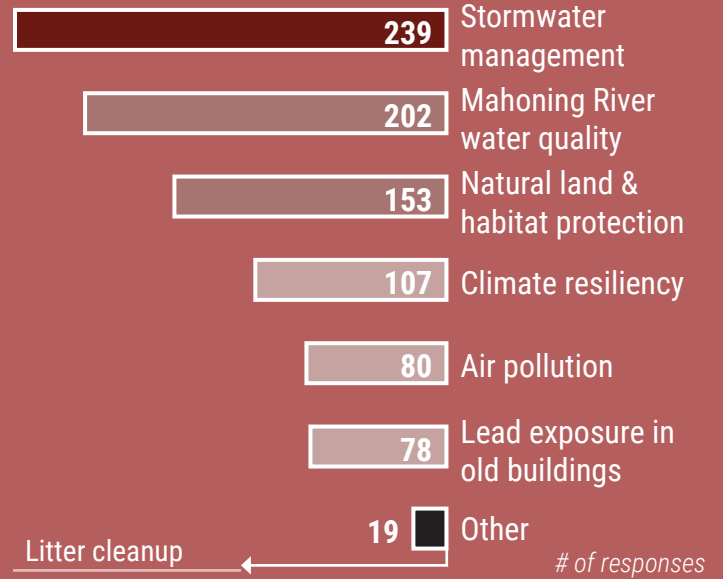


Figure 43 How does the current park system and Wellness Center fit your needs?



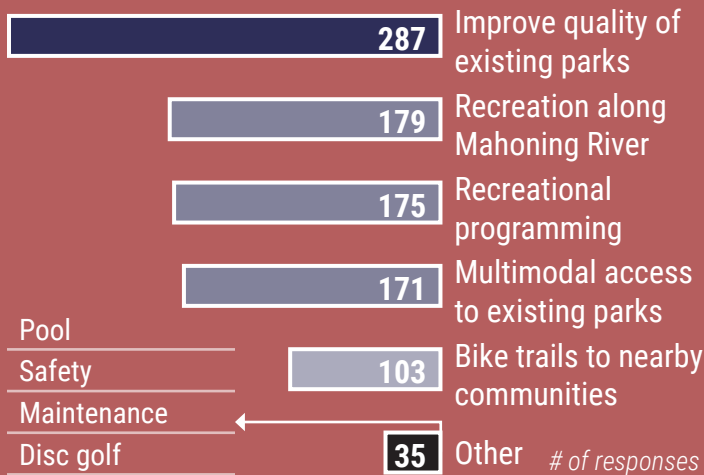
% of responses

Figure 45 What are the three most important environmental priorities in Niles?



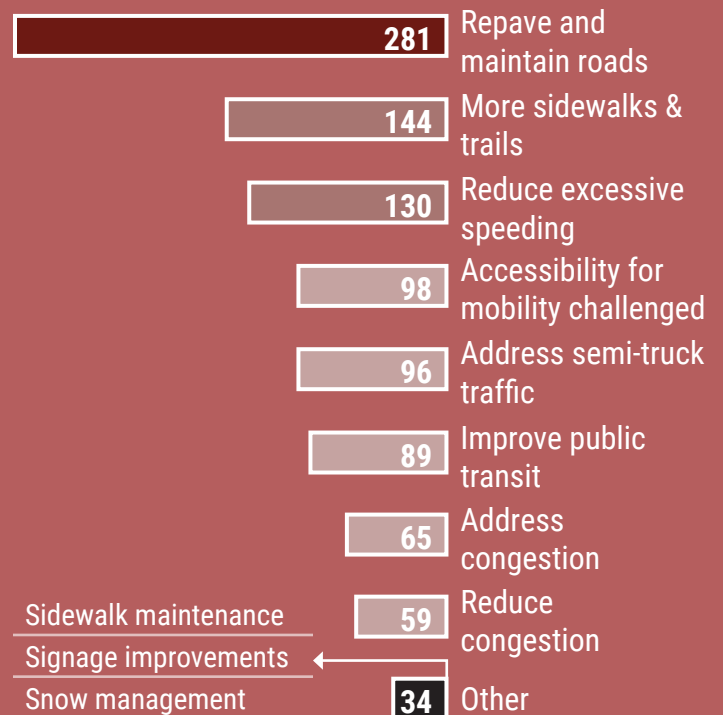
of responses

Figure 44 What are the three most important priorities regarding parks in Niles?



of responses

Figure 46 What are the three most important transportation priorities in Niles?



of responses

Figure 47 How often do you visit downtown Niles?

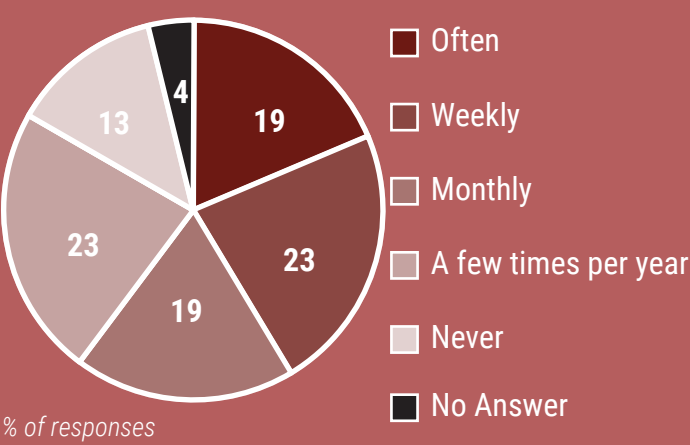


Figure 48 What would make you visit downtown more often?

